

# Ramadan



Health Advice

# Background

- ❑ The Holy month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar in which Muslim adults observe the fast from dawn to sunset every year.
- ❑ Muslims observing the fast are required to abstain not only from eating and drinking, but also from taking oral medications, intravenous nutritional fluids and of course from smoking.
- ❑ The experience of fasting is intended among other many beneficial effects on the body to teach Muslims self-discipline and self-restraint.
- ❑ However, if fasting significantly affects the health of the individual or when one is sick, Islam exempts him or her from fasting. “The underlying message behind Ramadan is self-discipline and self-control.

# Body Metabolism

- ❑ During fasting the metabolic rate of a fasting person slows down and other regulatory mechanisms start functioning where the stored body fats and dietary fats are efficiently utilized.
- ❑ It has been found that a slight decrease in blood sugar (glucose) occurs in normal adults a few hours after fasting has begun. However, this reduction ceases due to increased glucose production from the breakdown of body and dietary fats.
- ❑ Ramadan is therefore, a good opportunity to lose weight (for those who are overweight!), lower cholesterol and for a better control of diabetes and blood pressure.
- ❑ But this is not always the case as the opposite happens in some cases and this is due to compensatory eating (after the break of the fast!), which involves unbalanced diet, that is very rich in fat and sugar and high in calories, plus lack of exercise.

# Diet During Ramadan

- ❑ Not drinking or eating during daylight hours is a big change for most of us.
- ❑ Fasting can cause temporary low blood sugar.
- ❑ Dehydration is common during fasting. The body continues to lose water and salts mainly through sweat and urine
- ❑ Accordingly, you might feel : tired, irritability, headache, faint or light-headed, hunger, loss of concentration.
- ❑ Over eating (after breaking our fast during Iftar) can cause:
  - Tendency to hyperglycaemia (increase blood sugar)
  - Indigestion
  - Breathing and sleeping problems

# What Can We Do?

- Drink sufficient water between "Iftar" and sleep to avoid dehydration.
- Consume sufficient vegetables & fruits.
- Avoid intake of high sugar foods through sweets or other forms.
- Avoid spicy foods.
- Avoid caffeine drinks such as coke, coffee or tea. A sudden decrease of caffeine in the blood (caffeine withdrawal) leads to headaches, nausea, mood swing and irritability especially during the first days of fasting.
- Smoking is a health risk factor. Avoid smoking cigarettes, if you can't give up smoking, cut down gradually starting few weeks before Ramadan.
- Everyone should engage in some kind of exercise such as walking.
- Get enough sleep to avoid precipitation of fatigue.

# Fasting and Some Medical Conditions

- ❑ If you have any significant medical condition and in order to judge correctly whether to grant medical advice on fasting, it is essential that you have to consult your physician.
- ❑ Specially, those who have the following conditions should regularly and closely consult with their physicians:
  - Diabetes
  - Lactation & Pregnancy
  - Heart Problems
  - Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)
  - Peptic Ulcer
- ❑ However, if fasting significantly affects the health of the individual, Islam exempts him or her from fasting. “The underlying message behind Ramadan is self-discipline and self-control”.

# Ramadan and Fatigue

- ❑ The lunar calendar does not correspond to the Gregorian calendar; and thus Ramadan's occurrence varies each year and may in some years occur during very hot summer months such as this year.
- ❑ During Ramadan, changes of our daily routines are markedly altered. The obligation to eat only during the night leads to a definite change in the rhythm of life, sleep, eating schedule, and the alternation of rest and activity are especially affected.
- ❑ Cessation of caffeine use and smoking during Ramadan can also induce stress and fatigue among other symptoms.
- ❑ The consequence of all of this may be diminishing our ability to perform our tasks and increase the risk for accidents at work and home
- ❑ One of the major safety challenges during Ramadan is safe driving

# What Can We Do?

- Make sure you get enough sleep. 7 – 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep is important to everyone's health and well-being
- Plan your demanding activities in the morning when you are more alert
- Attend toolbox meeting regularly.
- Avoid working when you are fatigued
- Avoid dehydration. The effects of dehydration can range from mild (a headache) to severe (heat stroke).
- Eat well. Fasting can cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) with symptoms including tiredness, more sweating, confusion, and fainting.
- Employees are at greater risk for an on-the-job and off-the-job traffic crash during Ramadan. It is important to follow journey management procedures, avoiding unnecessary journeys, buckle up and avoid driving when tired or distracted. Remind each other not to speed and **be a safe driver**.



