



Pregnancy and Parenting During

Ramadan



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Ramadan is the 9th month in the Islamic calendar and the most sacred month. This is when the Quran (Muslims' religious text) was revealed to the prophet.

This time is used to reconnect with God

Ramadan is a time used to:

- pray more
- be kinder
- not swear or lie
- be gentle in character
- take part in charity work

During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for up to 30 days (not even drinking water).

Fasting encourages Muslims to:

- feel an affinity with people across the world who have little or no food to eat
- increase *taqwa* (closeness to/consciousness of God)
- develop feelings of gratitude, self-discipline and self-improvement, at both an individual and community level

The breaking of fast is called Iftar. This is a meal you eat at the end of each fasting period at sunset. A meal is then shared with family and friends.

During Ramadan, not all Muslims are expected to fast.

This includes:

- elderly
- children
- individuals who are sick
- travellers
- menstruating women

This rule also applies to pregnant and breastfeeding women who are sick or fear that fasting may be a risk.

Islamic law gives clear permission for women to opt out of fasting if they fear that it will harm their health or the health of their baby, and make up for the fast.



Many mothers feel anxious about fasting whilst breastfeeding or being pregnant. In this guide we hope to answer questions you may have during this time. Everyone is different so it is important to seek advice from your health professional to ensure the health and wellbeing of you and your baby.



Pregnancy & Ramadan

Ramadan is a very special time of year for those that follow it.

Being unable to fast when pregnant can be difficult.

Missing Fast

The scholars have different views as to whether a woman who miss fasts due to pregnancy or breastfeeding should:

- make up the days missed (i.e. *make qadā*)
- feed a person in need for each day missed (i.e. *give fidyah*)
- do both of the above

The strongest belief is that Allah knows best. It is believed that feeding a person in need for each day missed is all that is needed

Below you will find support for this view:



Ibn 'Abbās (radiyallāhu 'anhumā) said:

"If the pregnant woman fears for herself, or the breastfeeding woman for her child in Ramadān, then they are to break their fast and in place feed a poor person for each day and they are not to make up the missed days."

Its chain of narration is saḥīḥ. Reported by At-Tabari in his Tafsīr (2/136, Dar Al-Fikr)

Ibn 'Umar (radiyallāhu 'anhumā) was asked about a pregnant woman who fears for her unborn child, so he responded:

"Let her break her fast and feed a poor person for each missed day one mudd of wheat."

Its chain of narration is saḥīḥ. Reported by At-Tabari in his Tafsīr (2/136), Ad-Dāruqutni in his Sunan (2/206), and he said, *"Its isnad is saḥīḥ."*

Is fasting safe for me and my baby?

If you have any concerns for your health or for your baby (including underlying health conditions), speak to a health professional before starting your fast.



When breaking your fast at night:

Blood sugar levels can become too high if you're eating a lot at Suhoor (pre-dawn meal) and Iftar (meal taken at dusk). So eat smaller meals more often than usual.



Things to consider and discuss with a healthcare professional:

- How you feel
- If you have pre-existing health conditions
- What stage of your pregnancy you're at
- How your pregnancy is going

It is important to consider when the fast takes place. If Ramadan falls during the summer, the days will be longer and hotter. This will mean you are more at risk of dehydration (check the 'signs to look out for' section on page 16 of this booklet).

Tips for a healthier fast



- ✓ Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids at Suhoor. You need to drink more than usual when you're pregnant. You can also eat foods that contain lots of water such as stews, soups, fruits and vegetables!
- ✓ Fruit juice (*recommended limit 150ml a day*) will provide some of the vitamins you've lost during the day. You could also try a smoothie made with milk, yoghurt, ice and fruit.
- ✓ Changes to eating habits and lack of fluids (and being pregnant) can make you constipated. Eat lots of high-fibre foods when you break your fast. This can be wholegrains, fruit, vegetables and beans.
- ✓ Remember to take a folic acid supplement during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. You will also need a 10mcg vitamin D supplement throughout pregnancy.
- ✓ Fasting (and pregnancy) can bring on indigestion. Try eating small meals often during non-fasting hours. Keep to low-fat and low-salt foods.
- ✓ Take things easy and accept help. You may need to mark Ramadan with more quiet, restful time.



How can I plan for Ramadan?

Pregnancy can be a demanding time for your body. You and your baby need plenty of nutrients and fluids.

- **Talk to your doctor or midwife before you start fasting. You may need:**
 - a health check
 - support to work out your own dietary needs
 - to have more frequent check ups during your fast
- Talk to your employer about managing your work during Ramadan. It may be possible for you to reduce your working hours or have extra breaks.
- Keep a food diary, so you know what you're eating and drinking.
- Where possible, try to shop for your food and complete household tasks before you fast.



Signs to look out for during fasting



If you experience any of the following, contact your doctor or midwife for advice:

- You're not putting on any weight or you're losing weight. This could be harmful for your baby. It is unlikely you will be weighed at your antenatal appointments. So weighing yourself is a good idea.
- You have ongoing headaches or fever, nausea or vomiting.
- Decrease in your baby's movement.
- You become very thirsty, urinate less or it is a dark colour. These are signs of dehydration.
- You feel dizzy, faint, weak, confused or tired, even after you've rested.



Break your fast immediately with a sugary drink and a salty snack or an oral rehydration solution such as Dioralyte and contact your doctor or midwife.



What is the healthier way to break my fast?

There is no limit to your Iftar (evening meal) and your Suhoor (pre-dawn meal). When pregnant, it's better to have more small well-balanced, nutritious meals after you break your fast.



Ideas for Iftar

You could start with:

- ✓ A few dates and fruit juice (great for your sugar levels)
- ✓ Semi-skimmed milk
- ✓ A clear-based soup



Well-balanced meal ideas:

- ✓ Salad or fatoush
- ✓ Protein - chicken and other meat or fish, or lentils, chickpeas or beans
- ✓ Complex carbohydrates - brown rice, wholemeal pasta and wholewheat bread
- ✓ Vegetables



Things to avoid:

- ✗ Rich and high-fat, high sugar and salt foods (large meals can give you indigestion).
- ✗ Deep fried foods e.g. pakoras, samosas, fried dumplings - swap for whole grains, baked samosas and boiled dumplings.
- ✗ High sugar/high fat foods e.g. sweets and cakes, Gulab Jamun, Jalebi, Rasgulla, Balushahi, Baklava swap for milk based sweets and puddings.
- ✗ Foods made with lots of fat e.g. parathas, oily curries, greasy pastries swap for Chapattis made without oil, baked or grilled meat, reducing the fat added and increasing vegetables when cooking curries.



Visit www.nhs.uk and click pregnancy and keeping well in pregnancy

Ideas for Suhoor

Suhoor is one of the most important meals to consume during Ramadan, as it keeps your energy levels up during the day. It will also reduce hunger, headaches and tiredness.

Choose high-fibre foods and complex carbohydrates, such as grains and pulses. Your body takes longer to break down and absorb these foods, so they will fuel you better during your hours of fasting.

Your healthy meal could include:



Wholewheat breads,
with a little jam,
cheese or labneh



High-fibre (bran
based) cereal with
semi skimmed milk or
plain yoghurt



Fruit, such as
bananas and dates
(fresh, dried, tinned
(in juice) or frozen)



Porridge



Unsalted nuts

Breastfeeding & Ramadan



Some mothers are advised not to fast while breastfeeding. It is best to speak to a health professional if you are not sure. Reasons for exclusion can be:

- The age of your baby.
Less than six months and completely dependent on breast milk.
If your baby is more than a year old, already on complementary foods and drinks breast milk a few times, then you may be able to fast with little or no discomfort.
- If you are feeding more than one child.
- The time of year -
If Ramadan falls during the summer months, long and hot days will increase the risk of dehydration.
- If you have issues with low milk supply you may risk further lowering your milk production.
- Your health and your baby's current health needs e.g. premature baby, poor weight gain, medical conditions.





If you choose to fast you must:

- ✓ stay cool
- ✓ well rested
- ✓ keep hydrated
- ✓ watch your baby for any signs they are not getting enough milk



Counting Calories

On average, a woman needs around 2,000 calories a day. When breastfeeding, you will need an **extra 300 to 500 calories**. If you consume a lot less calories than this, your milk supply may be affected.

Exactly how many extra calories you need also depends on:

- your activity level
- your body fat
- the type of food you are eating
- how many babies you have (twins will need more calories)
- how much your baby needs



On average, we need to drink approximately 1 litre of water for every 20 kg of body weight. When breastfeeding you need about 3 litres of water a day. This helps to maintain milk supply.

Hands-on breastfeeding:

You may notice your baby becomes fussier at the end of the fasting day. This is due to the impact the fast has had on your body.

Milk flow may also slow down due to the stress of the fast. To help the flow you can try light breast compressions whilst feeding your baby.

Expressing milk:

There may be no change at all with the amount of milk, especially during the first half of the day.

When milk is expressed from the breast regularly, more milk will be produced. However, when you reduce the amount of liquid you drink the quantity of breast milk can be lower than the usual.

You may find that the milk looks thicker. This is your body's response to provide all your baby needs with less fluid.

Handy tips when breastfeeding and fasting:

- Keep a food diary, so you know what you're eating and drinking.
- Do not skip Suhoor - set an alarm clock if needs be.
- Evidence suggests that fasting can affect the levels of some nutrients in breast milk (zinc, magnesium and potassium). Eat well, and consider taking a vitamin supplement.
- Try "test fasts" before Ramadan to see how you cope. Some will find it helpful to take alternate days to fast – be it for the whole month, or for the first week. Remember it is ok to break your fast if you feel unwell or your baby is at risk.
- Keep cool and rest as much as you can during the day. Nap when your baby does, if possible!
- Listen to your body. Speak to a health professional if you feel unwell, and follow the advice that they give to you.

Preparing to Fast

You should prepare to start fasting for Ramadan: physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Try to prepare your food ahead of the day this will give you time to relax.

Staying hydrated:

Daily water intake is very important to keep the body hydrated. Try sipping water from sunset to early sunrise. Avoid caffeinated drinks as they contain diuretics (making you urinate more often).

Wise food choices:



- Aim for food that will help you sustain more energy throughout the day. Try foods with high fibre, low glycaemic index and which are less or not processed. **Swap white rice for brown rice!**
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day and aim for a variety of colours, a portion is about 1 handful (80g). **Dates have high fibre content and complex sugars to sustain your energy level!**
- Not everyone likes rice in the morning for the pre-dawn meal. You could try making a power shake by blending mangos with baby spinach and chia seeds, or yoghurt, honey and oats.



Breaking Your Fast

So you have prepared for fasting, but you feel you cannot continue. It's okay, everyone is different.

Breastfeeding and pregnant women are given rukhsah (concessions) to break their fast.

It is rahmah (mercy) from Allah. He knows, in His infinite wisdom, that He made certain people with certain limitations, and wants them to take advantage of any consolation that He has awarded. That is perfectly normal and nothing to be ashamed of.

Continuing to fast despite signs of dehydration is harmful to you and /or your baby. What is important is what is happening at the present moment.

Ramadan is not only fasting; it is a month of *'ibadah* (worship). There are other acts of worship that you can do to feel rewarded in this holy month.

Taking care of yourself and your baby is an act of *'ibadah* as you are fulfilling an *amanah* (responsibility bestowed by God).





Signs that you should break your fast:

- Losing weight rapidly
- Signs of hypoglycaemia such as giddiness, cold sweat, shivering, pale face, fatigue
- Signs of dehydration such as inadequate supply of milk, headache, dizziness, irritability, dry skin, not urinating or very dark yellow/brown urine

Whenever you feel that any of the above affects your ability to care for your baby, it's time to break your fast.



Signs of dehydration for your baby:

- restlessness and being fussy at the breast (due to less supply or flow of milk)
- cries constantly with no tears
- fewer wet and dirty nappies than normal
- dried, chapped lips, mouth and skin
- eyes and fontanelle (soft spot on baby's head) appear sunken
- increased sleepiness
- not gaining weight or weight loss is a **VERY** late sign of dehydration



Wellbeing & Preparation for Ramadan

Ramadan is a time for deeper connection with Islam, in both personal faith and the coming-together with others in the community. You may have more time to rest and spend on spiritual growth. However, you may also feel isolated, exhausted and overwhelmed if you have a new baby or young children.



Here are some tips to help:

1

Prepare your living space

Give your space a tidy and make it look as nice as you can. Make the month feel extra special with some decorations. If you have fairy lights or candles try arranging those around your room.

2

Set realistic goals

Ramadan is a time where we push ourselves to be the best we can be. Many of us try to pray more, read the Qur'an and increase our charity and good deeds.

Think about what your personal goals are and create a list. Be sure to include time for rest and things you enjoy as well as spiritual matters.

3

Be proud of yourself

Be proud of what you're doing! You're challenging yourself to be:

- resilient
- patient
- kind
- grateful
- forgiving
- empathetic

That's incredible! Celebrate what you manage to achieve this month and don't worry about what you don't.



4

Don't compare yourself to others

Remember, nobody is perfect.

When you're tired and hungry it's hard to do all the things we want to do in the way we want to do them.

Focus on what is meaningful to you. How you spend your time during Ramadan is between you and God. Your best is good enough.

5

Be kind to yourself

You might be spending a lot more time in self-reflection.

Use this time to realise how often you say or think negative things about yourself. Every time you have a negative thought, try to be mindful of it and replace it with a kinder thought. This is a helpful habit you can continue after Ramadan is over.

6

Look after your health

Here are some things you can do to look after yourself physically:

- Take naps! Catch up on your sleep when you can
- If possible, ask your family to help with the children so you have time to rest
- Don't over-exercise
- Get some fresh air and sunshine. If you have the energy, try a gentle walk before sunset (the hungriest part of the day)

7

Purify

Intoxicants come in many forms.

Ramadan intends purification amongst other things. You are working to better yourself in mind, body and spirit, to come closer to God.

During Ramadan, you must ask yourself: Why am I doing this?

This is not about punishment, but being kind to yourself.

Ramadan with Young Children

Here are some tips that will make it easier for you In Sha Allah:

- Keep children on their regular schedule
- Have planned activities for children ready
- Get rest during the day
- Don't attend iftar if they interfere with your child's bedtime

Here are some ideas to keep your little ones busy during the day:

- colouring or painting
- building blocks
- imaginary play
- reading or writing stories
- puppet shows
- create iftar menus

Create a Ramadan Journal

You can help your children write or draw in their own Ramadan Journal.

- checking off the prayers they fulfilled each day of Ramadan
- jotting down how many hours they fasted
- noting what good deed they did today
- what surah they recited
- what dua they made
- a reflection on how they can become a better Muslim (drawings count too!)





Make moon binoculars

Since the beginning of Ramadan and Eid is decided based on moon sightings, why not have some fun and look at how the moon's phases change every day?

Just stick two tubes together and decorate!

Ramadan and Eid Cards

You will see the crescent moon during both Ramadan and Eid. Get little ones to make simple cards /pictures of the moon, they will make great gifts for family and friends!

All you need is card or paper, pens & pencils to draw and anything else you may find around the house to decorate.



Recipes for Breaking Fast

Suhoor Ideas

Banana shake

- 500ml milk
- 2 ripe bananas
- 1 tbsp rolled oats

Date shake

- 500ml milk
- 5 dates
- 1 tbsp chia seeds

Blend the ingredients with a food blender.

These taste great when served chilled.

Jumbo oats

- Rolled oats
- 1 tbsp chia seeds (it gives a pudding like texture)
- Honey
- Milk/natural yoghurt

This can stay in the fridge for 2 to 3 days, add a splash of milk if it's too thick.

Top up with something different every day: Fresh seasonal fruit, flaxseed for omega3 boost, almonds walnuts, dried fruits, dates, apricots, figs or raisins.

Iftar Ideas

Creamy pumpkin soup

- 1kg chopped pumpkin
- 2 litres of boiling water
- 2 onions diced
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 4 potatoes cut in cubes
- 2 carrots cut in cubes
- 4 tbsp cream
- 1 tsp crushed garlic and ginger
- 1 tsp curry and coriander powder
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- Chopped parsley (optional)

Sauté the onion lightly.

Add the pumpkin, spices and water and bring to the boil then simmer for 25 minutes until the pumpkin is soft then blend it with a food blender and add the potatoes and carrots, boil until the vegetables are ready, then add 4 tbsp cream and sprinkle with fresh parsley.

It's a nice thick soup which can be eaten as a main course with flat bread or rolls.



Spinach & sweet potatoes

- 500g spinach chopped
- 400g diced sweet potato (or normal potatoes)
- 200g chickpeas
- 2 crushed cloves of garlic
- 1 big chopped tomato
- 1 onion
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- A pinch of chili flakes
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp salt
- Half cup of water

Sauté the onion until light brown.

Then add the tomato, spices and the water. Let it cook a few minutes, and then add the sweet potatoes. Cook for around 5 minutes (they should still be crunchy). Then add the spinach and chickpeas and let it cook for 7 minutes. If the spinach leaves a lot of water, let it simmer without the lid until the water evaporates.

Serve with whole grain rice and natural yogurt.

Oriental salad

- tomatoes
- cucumber
- red onions
- red peppers
- parsley
- mint
- salt and pepper
- olive oil
- squeeze of lemon



Cut everything into small cubes and mix it together.



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**May this
Ramadan bring
peace, joy, and good
health to you and
your family.**

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Small Steps Big Changes - giving every child the best start in life