

Media Update

22 May 2018

WHO

Health Advisory

WHO Advisory for a Healthy Ramadan

During the Holy month of Ramadan, healthy adult Muslims practice daily fasting from dawn until sunset. Traditionally, one breaks the fast at sunset with “Iftar” and then eats again pre-dawn at “Sehri”. Fasting in this Ramadan 2018 is expected to last over 16 hours on most days, making it all the more important to look after your health. There is ample evidence to suggest that fasting can have positive effects on your health.

While fasting is obligatory for all healthy Muslims, there are exemptions for those who are ill or who's health could be affected by fasting, for example, pregnant or breastfeeding women and people with chronic illnesses such

diabetes.



While iftar meals are often a time for celebration, with families and friends coming together to break their fasts, it is important to avoid weight gain. Ramadan can be a good time to make changes to improve the balance of your diet that you can sustain in the longer term. Smoking is bad for your health and Ramadan is also a great opportunity to change unhealthy lifestyle habits, including smoking.

Healthy Eating in Ramadan

A healthy diet should provide us with the right amount of energy (calories or kilojoules), from foods and drinks to maintain **energy balance**. How much energy you need from foods and drinks depends on many different things, such as how active you are. Eating only as many calories as you need will help to maintain a healthy weight. However, the foods and drinks you choose need to be the right ones, and in the right proportions to stay

healthy.

Drink plenty of fluids, as well as consuming fluid-rich foods, such as fruit, vegetables, soups and stews. High temperatures can also make you sweat more, so it is important to drink fluids to replace what you lose during the day and to start the next day of fasting well hydrated (at least 10 glasses). Salt stimulates thirst and so it's a good idea to avoid consuming a lot of salty foods. Avoid caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea and cola, because caffeine can make some people urinate more often, which may lead to dehydration. Try to curtail the consumption of fried, processed or fat-rich foods. The changes to eating habits and lack of fluids during the day may cause constipation, and this can be eased by consuming plenty of high fibre foods, such as wholegrains, high fibre cereals, fruit and vegetables, alongside plenty of fluids and light physical activity such as walking.

What to eat and drink at iftar and sehri

Iftar – when breaking the fast, go for plenty of fluids, low fat, fluid-rich foods and foods containing some natural sugars for energy. Below are some examples:

- Drinks – water, milk, fruit juices or smoothies – water provides hydration without any extra calories or added sugars. Drinks based on milk and fruit provide some natural sugars and nutrients – these are also good to break the fast but avoid drinking a lot of drinks with added sugars after breaking the fast as these can have high calorie content;
- Dates – traditionally eaten to break the fast since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, dates are a great way to break the fast as they provide natural sugars for energy, provide minerals like potassium, copper and manganese and are a source of fibre. Other such sources of fibre are apricots, figs, raisins or prunes;
- Vegetables- incorporate plenty of vegetables in your iftar to provide vital vitamins and nutrients, and green salads that contain plenty of hydrating cucumber and tomato;
- Fruits- provide natural sugars for energy, fluid and some vitamins and mineral- adding watermelon to your meal ensures greater hydration;
- Soup – a light way to break the fast and provides fluid. Traditional soups are based on a meat broth and often contain pulses, like lentils and beans, and starchy foods like pasta or grains, providing nutrients and energy.

After breaking the fast try to make sure the foods you eat provide a balance of starchy foods, fruit and vegetables, dairy foods and protein-rich foods like meat, fish, eggs and beans. For example you could have a range of curries including fish, meat, vegetables and pulses, served with rice, chapattis and yogurt. Try to limit the amount of fatty and sugary foods and sugary drinks as much as possible.

If you can, once you have had a chance to digest your food, you could try doing some light exercise such as going for a walk. If you attend Taraweeh prayers (special night-time prayers for Ramadan) in the evening, perhaps you could walk all or part of the way there.

Sehri – provides fluids and energy for the day of fasting ahead, so making healthy choices can help you to cope better with the fast. It is especially important for special groups such as the elderly, adolescents, pregnant women and nursing mothers, as well as children who choose to fast. Drink plenty of fluids and choose fluid-rich foods to make sure you are well hydrated for the day ahead and go for starchy foods for energy, choosing high fibre or wholegrain varieties where possible as these tend to be digested more slowly. Below are some examples:

- Rice, high-fibre breakfast cereals, oats or muesli (usually consumed with milk or yogurt), provide plenty of fibre, vitamins and minerals,
- Yogurt –provides nutrients like protein, calcium, iodine and B vitamins and also contains fluid.
- Breads preferably wholegrain options as these provide more fibre, for example wholemeal toast or chapattis. Avoid combining bread with salty foods like hard cheese, or preserved meats. You could try nut butters (without added salt), soft cheese, or banana.

Fasting with diabetes

People who are ill or have medical conditions do not have to fast. Those suffering from with Type 1 diabetes are generally advised not to fast as it puts them at higher risk of hypoglycaemia and dehydration. People who have their diabetes under control, either by their diet or using tablets, may be able fast. However, their doctors may require them to change their medication to help them take tablets outside fasting times. Those who need insulin to control their diabetes are generally advised not to fast. However, if you do choose to fast, then you must consult your doctor or healthcare team before Ramadan, to make sure that you are able to look after yourself properly. Failing to do so is in itself contrary to the Qur'an, which clearly states that you must not act in

a way that harms your body.

If, after consulting with your doctor, you decide to fast, note that you will require less insulin before the start of the fast, and the type of insulin may also need to be changed (pre-mixed insulin is not recommended during fasting). Try to eat just before sunrise and include more slowly absorbed food such as basmati rice and dhal, in your meal, along with fruit and vegetables. Check your blood glucose levels more often than you normally would do. At the end of fasting you should drink plenty of sugar-free and decaffeinated fluids to avoid being dehydrated, and take small quantities food, avoiding sweet or fatty foods.

Fasting with Severe Migraines

People with uncontrolled [migraines](#) should not fast, but managing migraines is possible with the right medicine and certain lifestyle changes. Ask your doctor for further advice on controlling your migraines.

Fasting with Hypertension

People with well-controlled high blood pressure can fast. Your GP may advise you to change your medicine to help you take tablets outside fasting times. Someone with [low blood pressure](#) who is otherwise healthy may fast, but they must ensure they drink enough fluid and have enough salt.

Fasting during Pregnancy & Breastfeeding

There's medical evidence to show that fasting while pregnant or breastfeeding isn't a good idea. If a pregnant or breastfeeding mother feels strong and healthy enough to fast, she may do so. However, if she doesn't feel well enough to fast, Islamic law gives her clear permission not to, and to make up the missed fasts later or perform fidyah.

Eat slowly and enjoy your meal!!

The Office of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, the European Union, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Embassy of Sweden cordially invite you to World Press Freedom Day 2018. This year's celebration will be under the theme "Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and the Rule of Law". WPF 2018 will



encourage discussion and promote understanding and awareness about current challenges to freedom of expression as well as achievements. This will be an outreach event, aimed at raising awareness about different viewpoints on the role of press freedom in societies.
