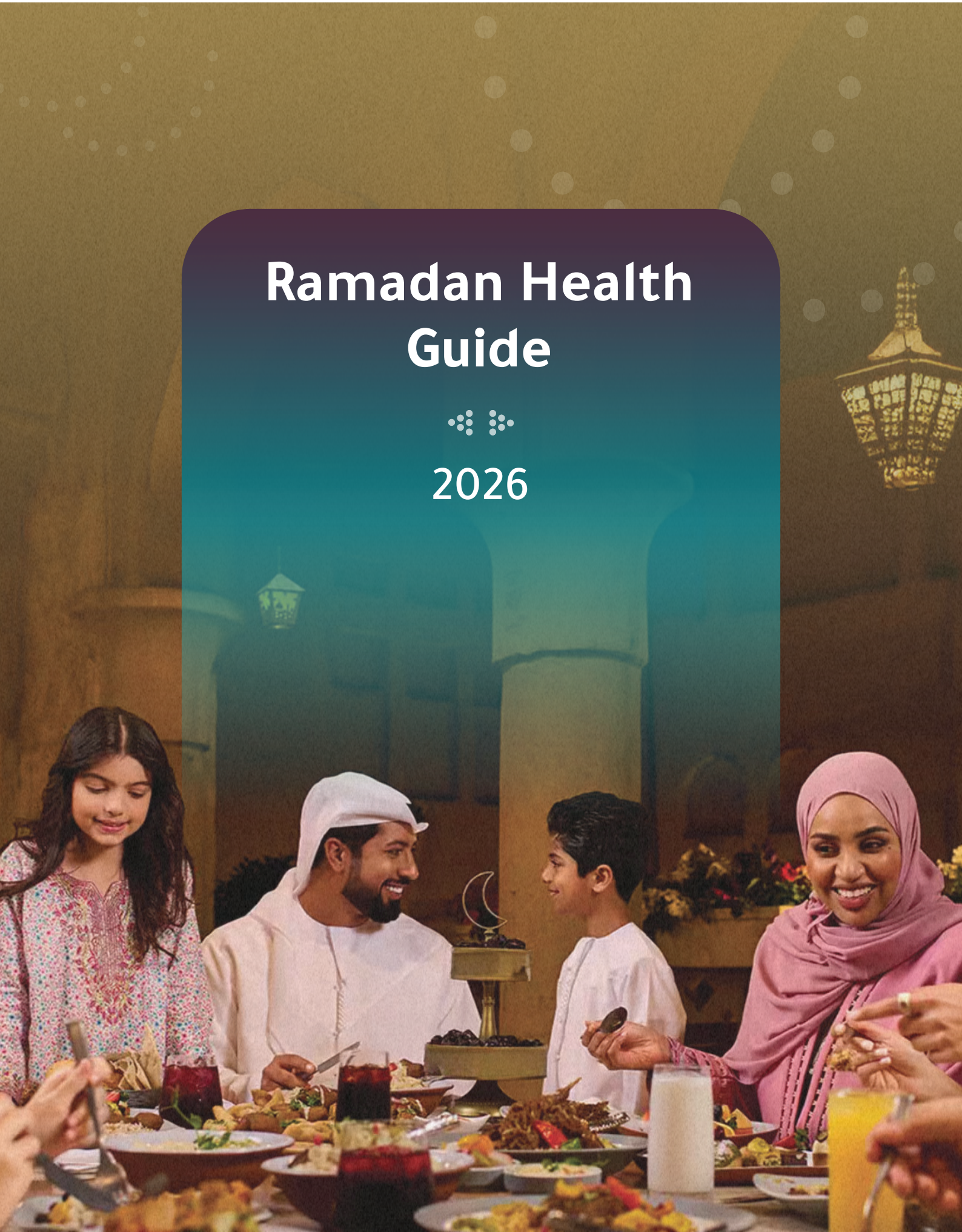
هـيئـة الصـحـة بدبـي
DUBAI HEALTH AUTHORITY

Ramadan Health Guide

2026



Introduction

From a health perspective, the month of Ramadan represents a unique model of a healthy lifestyle, as it combines time-restricted eating, behavioural organisation, and mental discipline. When practised correctly, it can be an annual opportunity to reset one's lifestyle, improve eating behaviours, regulate sleep, and enhance both mental and physical health.

Guide Objectives

This guide aims to:

1. **Reduce potential health effects associated with fasting**
By supporting metabolic and digestive balance, and helping maintain a healthy weight and stable energy levels through balanced nutrition, moderation at Iftar and Suhoor, light physical activity, and adequate rest.

2. **Prevent dehydration**
By promoting adequate hydration between Iftar and Suhoor through regular water intake, reducing caffeine and salty foods, and consuming foods rich in fluids.

3. **Manage chronic diseases and prevent their complications during fasting**
By supporting safe fasting for people with chronic conditions through nutritional planning, choosing suitable foods, and specialist medical follow-up.

4. **Improve sleep and energy levels**
By promoting healthy sleep habits to maintain alertness and productivity, such as organising sleep times, avoiding heavy meals before sleep, and reducing screen use.

5. **Support mental health**
By promoting psychological balance through spiritual practices, organising daily behaviours, reducing stress, and strengthening resilience and wellbeing.

The Role of Fasting in Reducing Inflammation and Improving Hormonal Balance

Inflammation

Studies have shown that Ramadan fasting may contribute to lowering inflammatory markers such as:

- C-reactive protein (CRP)
- Interleukin-6 (IL-6)
- Tumour necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-α)

Lower levels of these markers are associated with:

- Reduced oxidative stress
- Improved gut health
- Regulated immune responses by activating the body's cellular clean-up process (autophagy).
- Promoting the use of fatty acids and ketone bodies over glucose, improving metabolic flexibility.

Hormones

The endocrine system adapts to the new eating and sleeping pattern during Ramadan. Key hormonal changes may include:

- **Insulin:** better regulation and reduced insulin resistance.
- **Stress hormones:** more balanced levels (e.g., cortisol and noradrenaline), due to daily routines and spiritual practices.
- **Leptin and ghrelin:** improved hunger and satiety signalling, often alongside fat loss.
- **Growth hormone:** increased secretion during fasting, which may support tissue repair and fat metabolism.

Good sleep and nutritious meals are essential to maintain hormonal stability throughout the month.

Ramadan as a Model of Intermittent Fasting

Ramadan fasting follows a time-restricted eating pattern similar to intermittent fasting, where food intake is limited to a specific daily time window.

During the long fasting period:

- The body shifts from relying on glucose to using fat as an energy source.
- Insulin levels decrease, supporting fat burning and improving metabolic flexibility.
- The digestive system gets a rest period, supporting gut health.

Unlike optional intermittent fasting, Ramadan combines spiritual commitment, social responsibility, and behavioural moderation, which can strengthen adherence and support broader health outcomes.

Fasting and Metabolic Health

Ramadan fasting is associated with several metabolic benefits, including:

- Improved insulin sensitivity
- Better blood sugar control
- Reduced body fat and waist circumference
- Improved lipid markers (lower LDL cholesterol and triglycerides)
- Better energy regulation and more stable blood sugar due to reduced snacking
- Activation of cellular repair mechanisms such as autophagy (a natural process that recycles damaged cellular components; its degree varies between individuals)
- Promoting mindful eating, portion control, and regular hydration.

To achieve these benefits, it is important to avoid excessive sugars, fried foods, and heavy meals during Iftar hours, and to focus on balanced, nutrient-rich meals.

Pillars of Health in Ramadan

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Healthy Nutrition in Ramadan

1. The Healthy Plate in Ramadan

The "healthy plate" concept is based on dividing the meal into balanced components that support good digestion and sustained energy.

A healthy Iftar meal should include:

- Vegetables rich in vitamins and fiber
- Lean proteins
- Whole grains
- Avoid foods high in fat, sugar, and fried items

Healthy Ramadan plate distribution:

Protein (¼ of the plate)

Lean proteins such as:

- Grilled chicken
- Fish
- Legumes (lentils, chickpeas, fava beans)

Protein helps maintain satiety and stable energy during the day.

Carbohydrates (¼ of the plate)

Complex carbohydrates provide gradual energy release and help maintain stable blood sugar:

- Whole-grain bread
- Brown rice
- Bulgur
- Oats

Whole grains are preferred because they digest more slowly and support sustained energy.

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Healthy Nutrition in Ramadan

Vegetables (½ of the plate)

It is recommended to increase vegetables because they are:

- Rich in fluids (support hydration)
- Support digestion
- Low in calories

Vegetables are a key part of any healthy Ramadan meal.

Healthy fats

Choosing healthy fats supports satiety and heart health. Recommended options include:

- Olive oil
- Nuts (almonds, walnuts)
- Avocado
- Flax and chia seeds

It is advised to avoid saturated fats, fried foods, and heavy fats.

Sugars

Frequent consumption of sweets and sugary foods in Ramadan is discouraged because it can lead to:

- Rapid blood sugar spikes
- Post-Iftar sluggishness
- Weight gain

Sweets should be consumed with strict moderation.

Fried foods:

It is better to avoid fried foods as they may cause:

- Indigestion
- Heartburn
- Weight gain
- Increased triglycerides

It is recommended to replace frying with grilling, boiling, or steaming.

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Healthy Nutrition in Ramadan

2. Organising the Main Iftar Meal – A healthy structure for the Iftar meal

A Breaking the fast in a healthy way

After long hours of fasting, blood sugar levels drop and the stomach is in a temporary low-activity state. Therefore, the body needs a gradual "restart" before a full meal by:

- Starting with easily absorbed foods
- Giving the stomach and digestive system a gentle signal to begin functioning.
- Avoiding a heavy meal immediately to prevent:
  - Sudden blood sugar spikes
  - Post-Iftar fatigue and low energy
  - Indigestion and bloating

The best physiological way to start Iftar:

2-3 dates + a cup of water, then wait 10-15 minutes before the main meal (this time can be used for Maghrib prayer).

Effect of dates and water at Iftar

Dates:

- Contain simple sugars such as glucose and fructose, which are quickly absorbed and restore energy balance
- Rich in potassium, helping replace lost electrolytes
- Cause fewer abrupt blood sugar spikes compared with processed sweets
- A limited amount (1-3 dates) supports the body without unnecessary extra calories.

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Healthy Nutrition in Ramadan

Water:

- Rehydrates the body gradually
- Helps prevent dehydration-related headaches
- Supports circulation and digestion
- Avoid drinking large amounts at once, as this may cause vomiting or digestive cramps

Risks of overeating immediately after fasting

Overeating right after fasting may lead to several problems:

I) Digestive problems

Rapid stomach filling can cause:

- Bloating
- Cramps
- Indigestion
- Acid reflux

II) Blood sugar fluctuations

High-fat and high-sugar meals may cause:

- Rapid rise in blood sugar.
- Followed by a sudden drop in blood sugar.

III) Feeling sluggish

Blood is redirected towards digestion instead of the brain, causing:

- Significant sleepiness
- Poor concentration
- Headaches later

IV) Weight gain

- Large food intake at once increases fat storage
- Calorie burning may decrease at night

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Healthy Nutrition in Ramadan

B After breaking the fast and waiting 10-15 minutes

- **A light starter plate:**
  - Soup (lentil/vegetable)
  - Fresh salad

  This prepares the stomach to receive food without pressure.

- **The main meal (one balanced plate):**

  Preferably includes:
  - **A light protein source:** grilled chicken, fish, or legumes
  - **Complex carbohydrates:** brown rice, whole-wheat bread, potatoes
  - **Cooked or boiled vegetables**

- **Important tips:**
  - Reduce salt and fat to avoid thirst at night
  - Avoid frying as much as possible
  - Eat slowly (at least 20 minutes)
  - Stop when you feel about 70% full

- **After Isha/Taraweeh:**

  A light snack if needed:
  - Fruit
  - A handful of unsalted nuts
  - Yoghurt
  - Unsweetened tea

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Healthy Nutrition in Ramadan

4. Healthy Suhoor

Healthy Suhoor is one of the most important pillars of maintaining health during Ramadan—especially when delayed to about 15 minutes before Fajr—because it provides the body with energy for the long fasting hours. A balanced Suhoor helps prolong satiety and reduce hunger and thirst during the day. It also stabilises blood sugar levels, reduces fatigue and dizziness, and supports physical and mental performance.

Components of an ideal Suhoor

Protein

Helps prolong satiety and reduce hunger.

Examples: eggs, fish, red meat, chicken, milk, yoghurt, fava beans, chickpeas, lentils.

Fibre

Improves digestion and slows sugar absorption.

Examples: oats, whole-grain bread, fruits, vegetables.

Healthy fats

Support heart health and increase fullness.

Examples: olive oil, avocado, nuts, natural animal fats.

Slow-digesting carbohydrates

Provide long-lasting energy during fasting.

Examples: whole-grain bread, brown rice.

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Healthy Nutrition in Ramadan

Foods to avoid or limit at Suhoor

They increase weight, thirst, fatigue, and daytime sluggishness.

Examples: salty foods, fried foods, concentrated sweets, hydrogenated oils.

Suhoor and the hunger hormone

A balanced Suhoor helps regulate ghrelin (a hormone responsible for hunger). Ghrelin rises when the stomach is empty and decreases after eating. Choosing Suhoor foods rich in protein, fibre, and slow-digesting carbohydrates slows digestion and prolongs satiety, reducing ghrelin spikes during fasting hours. Regular Suhoor also supports stable hunger signals and reduces severe hunger episodes and daytime fatigue.

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Hydration and Dehydration Prevention in Ramadan

Water is essential for maintaining vital body functions, especially during fasting. Dehydration can lead to headaches, fatigue, and constipation.
Examples: water, light soups, water-rich vegetables such as cucumber and lettuce, and fruits such as watermelon, melon, and oranges.

Benefits of adequate hydration

- Maintain fluid balance inside cells
- Reduce headaches, fatigue, and dizziness
- Improve focus and attention
- Support circulation and oxygen delivery to cells
- Maintain normal body temperature
- Improve muscle and joint performance
- Support skin freshness and elasticity

Daily fluid needs by body weight

Fluid needs vary by age, activity level, and weather. A commonly used estimate for many adults is:

30-35 ml of water per kg of body weight per day (approximately 2-3 litres, or about 6-8 cups daily). This includes all fluids, though most should ideally be water.

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Hydration and Dehydration Prevention in Ramadan

Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses a large amount of fluids without replacement, affecting many body functions.

Common signs:

- Intense thirst
- Dry mouth, lips, and skin
- Reduced urination or darker urine
- Fatigue and exhaustion
- Difficulty performing daily tasks
- Headache and dizziness (may be due to temporary low blood pressure)
- Poor focus and attention

Signs of severe dehydration

- Palpitations or rapid heartbeat
- Low blood pressure
- Muscle cramps
- Loss of consciousness

Distributing fluids between Iftar and Suhoor

During Ramadan, total fluid needs remain the same; the key is timing and distribution between Iftar and Suhoor.

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Hydration and Dehydration Prevention in Ramadan

Best way to distribute fluids from Iftar to Suhoor:

- **At Iftar:** 1 to 2 cups of water (300-500 ml) Prefer drinking slowly and not in large amounts at once; warm herbal drinks can be consumed.
- **After Iftar** (over 2-3 hours): 2-3 cups (500-750 ml)
- **After Taraweeh or light activity:** 1-2 cups (300-500 ml)
- **At Suhoor (very important):** 2-3 cups (500-750 ml)

Drink in portions, not all at once.

This schedule helps reach 2-3 litres per day more easily.

Caffeine and Hydration

Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, some soft drinks, and energy drinks.

How does caffeine affect hydration?

Caffeine has a diuretic effect and may increase fluid loss when consumed in large doses (more than 400-500 mg/day, roughly 4-5 strong cups of coffee).

Tips to reduce its impact on hydration

- Avoid excessive energy drinks and highly caffeinated soft drinks.
- Drink a cup of water for each cup of coffee or tea.
- Focus on water and natural fluids, especially in hot weather or with exercise.
- In Ramadan, large caffeine intake before fasting may increase fluid loss during the day.
- It is best to reduce coffee and tea before fasting and focus on healthy fluids at Iftar and Suhoor.

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Sleep in Ramadan

During Ramadan, sleep habits change due to fasting and waking for Suhoor, which may affect energy and overall health.

Effects of lack of sleep on weight

- Increases appetite, especially for high-calorie foods and sugars
- Reduces sensitivity to leptin (satiety hormone) and increases ghrelin (hunger hormone)
- May lead to weight gain and abdominal fat

Effects of lack of sleep on blood sugar

- Weakens blood sugar control and reduces insulin sensitivity
- Increases long-term risk of high blood sugar
- Raises risk of type 2 diabetes with persistent poor sleep

Effects of lack of sleep on immunity

- Reduces production of immune cells and antibodies
- Increases susceptibility to infections and viruses
- Good sleep supports faster recovery from illness

Effects of lack of sleep on mood

- Increases stress, anxiety, and depression feelings
- Reduces focus, attention, and cognitive productivity
- Increases iirritability and temper.

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Sleep in Ramadan

Strategies to regulate sleep in Ramadan

Set consistent sleep and wake times daily as much as possible. Consistency helps regulate sleeping and reduces fatigue.

Sleep after Suhoor:

A main sleep period of 4-5 hours after Suhoor can compensate for some nighttime sleep loss.

Create a suitable sleep environment:

- Dark, quiet room with moderate temperature
- Use blackout curtains and earplugs if needed
- Avoid screens (phone/computer/TV) 30-60 minutes before sleep
- Blue light delays melatonin secretion
- Avoid heavy meals immediately before sleep; choose light, easy-to-digest Suhoor foods

Healthy naps in Ramadan

Ideal timing:

- After Dhuhr prayer or before Asr
- Duration: 20-45 minutes is enough to refresh without affecting nighttime sleep

Benefits:

- Compensates for reduced night sleep
- Improves focus and energy
- Reduces stress and improves mood

Tips for healthy naps:

- Do not exceed 45 minutes to avoid sleepiness
- Keep the place dark and quiet
- If you cannot sleep, relaxing for 10-15 minutes can still be sufficient

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Physical Activity in Ramadan

Physical activity during Ramadan is important for maintaining overall health. It supports cardiovascular health, preserves muscle strength and fitness, and improves mood, sleep quality, and weight management. Regular movement also improves insulin response, stabilising blood sugar and reducing post-meal spikes.

To exercise safely during fasting, focus on three essentials: choosing the right timing, adjusting intensity, and ensuring hydration and nutrition during non-fasting hours.

First: Best times for physical activity

The best timing varies by lifestyle and fitness level, but activity is generally safer when the body can replace fluids and energy.

1. 1-2 hours after Iftar (best for most people)

Most suitable for moderate exercise and strength training, as the body has energy from food and you can drink water—reducing dizziness/dehydration risk and improving performance.

2. 30 - 60 minutes before Iftar (light activity only)

Suitable for light walking or stretching but avoid strenuous exercise because the body is less able to tolerate effort near the end of fasting hours and fluids cannot be replaced.

3. After Suhoor or early morning

May suit some people if Suhoor is balanced and hydration is adequate, keeping in mind that long fasting hours can increase thirst and fatigue later in the day.

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Physical Activity in Ramadan

Second: Appropriate exercise intensity

Use the “talk test”:

- **Light:** you can talk easily without interruption
- **Moderate:** you can talk but with noticeably faster breathing
- **High:** you can only say a few words due to shortness of breath

In Ramadan, it is preferable for most activity to be light to moderate, especially during fasting hours, as high intensity increases stress and dehydration risk.

Third: Suitable types of physical activity

1. **Walking (the safest and best option)**

Walking is simple and safe for most people. It improves circulation, supports digestion, reduces heaviness after Iftar, and helps stabilise blood sugar.

How to walk safely (three phases):

- **Warm-up (5 minutes):** slow, light walking
- **Main phase (15-30 minutes):** moderate pace
- **Cool-down (3-5 minutes):** slow walking to finish safely

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Physical Activity in Ramadan

2. Strength exercises (to maintain strength and tone)
Important for preserving muscle mass and preventing weakness. In Ramadan, keep duration and intensity reasonable and avoid excessive or very heavy weights.

Best time: 1-2 hours after Iftar
Suitable duration: 30-45 minutes
Sets: 2-3 rounds

- **Simple home exercises:**
  - Squats: 8-12 reps
  - Forward lunges: 8 reps per leg
  - Wall push-ups: 10-15 reps
  - Glute bridges: 10-15 reps
  - Plank hold: 15-30 seconds

- **Safety tips:**
  - Focus on correct form more than increasing repetitions
  - Reduce intensity if you feel dizziness, headache, or severe weakness
  - Avoid workouts that cause extreme exhaustion or a clear loss of energy
  - If you have any medical condition, consult your doctor about the best timing, intensity, and type of exercise

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Physical Activity in Ramadan

3. Stretching and flexibility exercises (to reduce tightness and improve comfort)

Stretching reduces stiffness and improves flexibility. It may also help relaxation and better sleep and is very suitable in Ramadan as it is not physically demanding.

Best times: before sleep or after exercise
Suitable duration: 5-10 minutes daily

Examples:

- Neck and shoulder stretches
- Back stretches
- Hamstring stretches
- Hip stretches

4. Light cardio alternatives (instead of walking)

Some people may choose light heart-activating activity after Iftar, avoiding high intensity.

Examples:

- Stationary cycling for 15-25 minutes
- Moderate treadmill walking
- Light stair climbing if able

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Physical Activity in Ramadan

Fourth: Risks of intense exercise while fasting

High-intensity exercise during fasting increases strain because fluids cannot be replaced. This may lead to dehydration, headache, dizziness, or muscle cramps. Symptoms of low blood sugar may also occur in some people, especially those with diabetes or blood sugar fluctuations.

Avoid the following during fasting:

- High-intensity workouts
- Very heavy weight lifting
- Long-distance running during the day
- Long workouts in hot weather
- Any activity causing severe panting or unusual exhaustion

Fifth: Warning signs that require stopping exercise immediately

You should stop immediately if symptoms appear that may indicate dehydration, low blood sugar, or extreme fatigue.

Stop immediately if you experience:

- Severe dizziness or near-fainting
- Strong headache or nausea
- Shaking or severe weakness
- Blurred vision or difficulty focusing
- Unusual palpitations or chest pain
- Severe thirst or dark urine

If symptoms are severe or do not improve quickly, seek medical advice.

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Physical Activity in Ramadan

Sixth: How physical activity helps stabilise blood sugar

Physical activity improves insulin sensitivity and increases muscles' ability to use glucose for energy, reducing post-meal sugar spikes. Therefore, walking after Iftar is one of the best daily habits in Ramadan.

- **A simple, effective habit:**
  10-20 minutes of light walking after Iftar to support blood sugar stability, improve digestion, and reduce heaviness.

Seventh: Hydration and nutrition to support exercise

Since drinking is not possible during fasting hours, hydration must be regular between Iftar and Suhoor. Balanced nutrition reduces fatigue and supports safe activity.

- **Nutrition tips to support exercise:**
  - **After exercise:** protein + healthy carbohydrates to support recovery
  - **At Suhoor:** whole grains + protein + vegetables for steady energy through the day

Eighth: Simple ready-to-apply plans

To facilitate physical activity during Ramadan, a plan can be chosen that suits the person's level:

Beginner plan
- 20-30 minutes walking after Iftar
- 5-10 minutes stretching

Intermediate plan
- 30-45 minutes strength training after Iftar
- 10-20 minutes light walking

Plan to support blood sugar
- 10-20 minutes light walking after Iftar daily

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Ramadan, Mental Health, and Healthy Behaviour Regulation

Ramadan fasting has a dual impact on mental health and healthy behaviour regulation, depending on individual readiness, support, and lifestyle. Ramadan can be an opportunity to enhance psychological balance for many people, and fasting may positively reflect on mood, calmness, and self-discipline—especially when sleep, food, and rest are organised well.

Positive mental health effects of Ramadan fasting

- Improved emotional regulation and stress management
- Reduced anxiety through spiritual mindfulness, prayer, and reflection
- Greater sense of purpose, gratitude, and self-control
- "Mental decluttering" by reducing distractions and unhealthy habits such as excessive screen time
- Strengthened social and community bonds

This may contribute to clearer thinking and better psychological balance.

Regulating healthy behaviours

Ramadan encourages:

- Mindful eating and reduced impulsivity
- Reducing harmful habits such as smoking and overeating
- Improved sleep–wake patterns when well managed
- Strengthening self-discipline and forming long-term habits

Combining fasting with spiritual commitment and social support enhances resilience and overall health.

Pillars of Health in Ramadan

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Ramadan, Mental Health, and Healthy Behaviour Regulation

Factors that may affect mental health during Ramadan and how to manage them

1.

Energy and mood during fasting hours

Some people notice changes in energy or mood during the day, especially in the first days, due to changes in eating and sleep times. These changes usually improve as the body adapts and a balanced lifestyle is followed.

Why mood changes may occur?

- The body adapting to a different dietary pattern
- Poor or disrupted sleep increasing irritability and stress

Practical tips to support mood:

- Break the fast gradually and avoid excessive sugars
- Take short rest breaks when needed
- Do light activity after Iftar to improve mood

2.

Stress and irritability (stress hormones)

The body has natural mechanisms to cope with daily stress, including hormones that support alertness and adaptation, such as cortisol. Studies and reviews related to Ramadan fasting have discussed changes in some hormone levels during the month, reflecting the body's ability to adapt to fasting and routine changes.

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Ramadan, Mental Health, and Healthy Behaviour Regulation

Why stress may increase before Iftar?

- Lower energy near the end of the day
- Fatigue due to lack of sleep
- Work pressure or daily responsibilities

Tips to reduce stress and anxiety:

- Organise sleep as much as possible and avoid repeated late nights
- Reduce stimulants in the evening to support sleep quality
- Use slow breathing exercises when feeling stressed
- Walk lightly after Iftar to support relaxation

3.

Fasting and anxiety/depression

Scientific studies and reviews suggest Ramadan fasting may be associated with improved psychological wellbeing and reduced stress/anxiety in some individuals, with responses varying based on lifestyle and sleep quality. Some findings also note that sleep may be affected for some people, and sleep is closely linked to mood stability and mental health.

Practices that support stability:

- Balanced diet and avoiding very heavy foods
- Reduce sugars and stimulants as much as possible
- Distribute meals between Iftar and Suhoor appropriately
- Allocate daily time for rest and relaxation

When to seek specialized support:

- Persistent sadness or anxiety for more than two weeks
- Symptoms affecting sleep, work, or relationships
- A clear tendency to withdraw or major decline in daily performance
- Thoughts of self-harm or harming others (requires immediate intervention)

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Ramadan, Mental Health, and Healthy Behaviour Regulation

4.

Focus and cognitive performance

Cognitive functions such as focus, attention, and memory relate to sleep quality, hydration, and food quality. Some studies suggest cognitive performance during Ramadan may vary by time of day and may decline in some people before Iftar due to fatigue.

Why focus may decline:

- Poor or insufficient sleep
- Not drinking enough water between Iftar and Suhoor
- Overeating heavy meals causing sluggishness

Tips to enhance focus:

- Schedule key tasks during higher-energy times (morning or after Iftar)
- Drink water gradually between Iftar and Suhoor
- Avoid very heavy meals at night
- Ensure adequate sleep

5.

Self-discipline and positive behaviour

Fasting is a practical training in self-control and managing desires and emotions, strengthening self-discipline and daily behaviour management. Behavioural studies have also discussed associations between Ramadan and changes in some aspects of decision-making and social cooperation in some individuals.

How self-discipline supports mental health:

- Reduced impulsivity and quick irritability
- Increased sense of control over behavior
- Better self-confidence and inner stability

Pillars of Health in Ramadan

Ramadan, Mental Health, and Healthy Behaviour Regulation

Practical steps to enhance self-discipline:

- Set simple daily goals that are achievable
- Use gradual change rather than sudden strict changes
- Focus on consistency and avoid excessive self-pressure

Brief tips to support mental health in Ramadan

- Follow a suitable sleep schedule as much as possible
- Drink water gradually between Iftar and Suhoor
- Eat balanced meals and avoid excess sugars
- Reduce caffeine at night to support sleep quality
- Do light physical activity regularly after Iftar
- Allocate daily time for rest and relaxation
- Seek support if symptoms persist

Special Groups

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People with Diabetes

1. Golden tip before starting:

Medical consultation before Ramadan is essential to adjust medication/insulin doses and timing, and to assess the ability to fast safely. If you have kidney or heart complications, or if you are pregnant with diabetes, your doctor may advise against fasting.

- **Tests:**
  HbA1c, kidney function tests, home glucose monitoring.

- **Treatment plan:**
  adjust insulin or oral medication doses to reduce the risk of daytime hypoglycaemia or Post-Iftar hyperglycaemia.

- **Education:**
  know the danger signs that require breaking the fast immediately (as listed below).

2. Healthy lifestyle and physical activity

Fasting Ramadan for people with diabetes requires careful advance planning to ensure safe fasting and avoid complications such as severe hypoglycemia or sudden hyperglycaemia.

- **Exercise:**
  avoid intense exercise during fasting hours (especially just before Iftar). The ideal time is two hours after Iftar.

Special Groups

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People with Diabetes

- **Taraweeh prayers:**
  can support daily physical activity; carry a water bottle and a small sweet (if hypoglycemia symptoms appear).

- **Sleep:**
  try to regulate sleep hours, as poor sleep negatively affects insulin resistance and glucose levels.

- **Blood glucose monitoring (self-testing):**
  Remember: checking blood sugar does not invalidate the fast.

  Check your blood sugar at the following times:
  1. Upon waking
  2. Midday
  3. Just before Iftar
  4. Two hours after Iftar
  5. Whenever you feel unwell or fatigued

3. Nutrition at Iftar and Suhoor

Smart nutrition (from Iftar to Suhoor): the goal is stable glucose levels and avoiding dehydration.

Iftar Meal:

- **Break the fast gradually:** start with one date and a cup of water to avoid sudden sugar spikes
- **Healthy Ramadan plate:** half of it vegetables, quarter protein, quarter complex carbs
- **Complex carbs:** replace white bread with whole-grain, and white rice with freekeh, bulgur, or quinoa

Special Groups

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People with Diabetes

Suhoor meal:

Delay your: Pre-dawn meal (Suhoor) as much as possible to shorten your fasting period.
Fibre and Protein: Focus on slow-digesting foods such as beans, eggs, yoghurt, and oats. These foods will keep you feeling full and help maintain stable blood sugar levels for longer.
Fluids: Drink at least 2 litres of water between Iftar and Suhoor.
Avoid sweetened Ramadan juices and caffeinated beverages as they cause increased urination and dehydration.

4. Important medical warnings:

When should you break the fast immediately?
Break the fast immediately if any of the following occur:

Situation	Blood sugar level	Action
Low blood sugar	Less than 70 mg/dL	Break the fast and take fast-acting sugar
High blood sugar	More than 300 mg/dL	Break the fast, drink plenty of water, and consult a doctor

- **Break your fast immediately if you experience severe hypoglycaemia symptoms, such as:**
  - Weakness and shaking
  - Sweating and clammy skin
  - Rapid heartbeat
  - Dizziness
  - Sudden hunger
  - Confusion or mental fog
  - Pale skin
  - Numbness in the mouth or tongue
  - Irritability and nervousness

Special Groups

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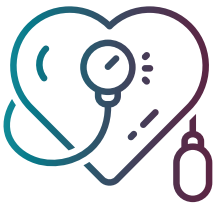
People with Hypertension



1. Golden tip:

If you have hypertension, consult your doctor before Ramadan to assess your ability to fast and adjust medication timing.

- **Pre-fasting medical assessment:**
  The goal is to confirm stable blood pressure and prevent dehydration that may negatively affect kidney function.

- **Tests:**
  home BP monitoring, kidney function tests, electrolytes (sodium and potassium).

- **Treatment plan:**
  switch multiple-dose regimens to extended-release once-daily dosing (at Iftar or Suhoor).

2. Healthy lifestyle and physical activity

Fasting for a person with hypertension requires careful strategies, especially regarding electrolyte and fluid balance to avoid sudden rises or drops in blood pressure due to dehydration.

- **Physical activity:**
  moderate activity such as walking two hours after Iftar.

- **Avoid heat stress:**
  stay in cool places during fasting hours; heavy sweating with limited water can cause a sharp drop in blood pressure.

Special Groups

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People with Hypertension

- **Smoking cessation:**
  Ramadan is a golden opportunity to reduce or stop smoking, a major contributor to atherosclerosis and high blood pressure.

3. Nutrition at Iftar and Suhoor

Correct nutrition is balancing salt and fluids: the main enemy is sodium (salt). The goal is to reduce it and focus on foods that support vascular health.

Iftar meal:

Avoid salty foods: pickles, canned soups, salty appetizers such as cheese sambousek

Focus on potassium-rich foods that support blood pressure control: bananas, dried apricots, dates, boiled potatoes

Leafy vegetables: consume salad as a main item; it's rich in fibre and minerals supporting circulation

Suhoor meal:

Reduce sodium: avoid salty cheeses, canned foods, and processed meats as they cause severe thirst and raise next-day blood pressure

Legumes and grains: fava beans and lentils are excellent; season with lemon, cumin, and olive oil rather than excess salt

Fluids (water): Adequate water intake (8-10 cups) is important to reduce blood viscosity and prevent dehydration.

Special Groups

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People with Hypertension

4. Important notice:

- **Medication timing:** Do not change your hypertension medication timing on your own—consult your doctor. Often the morning dose is moved to Iftar and the evening dose to Suhoor.

- **Diuretics:** If you are taking diuretic medications, it is advisable to consult your doctor to adjust their timing to avoid dehydration during fasting.

- **Blood pressure checks:** Measure twice daily (midday and after Iftar).

- **Liquorice warning:** People with hypertension should avoid liquorice completely; it can cause fluid retention and raise blood pressure sharply and quickly.

Hibiscus: May be consumed in small amounts when chilled or at room temperature. It is known to potentially support blood pressure reduction; however, caution is advised as it may interact with blood pressure medications and further lower blood pressure. Consult your doctor before use, and avoid consuming it close to medication times.

- **When to consult a doctor or stop fasting?**

Seek medical advice if you develop:

1. Severe headache at the back of the head or behind eyes
2. Ringing in the ears and blurred vision
3. Nosebleeds
4. Severe dizziness or near fainting (may indicate a sharp pressure drop due to dehydration)

Special Groups

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People with Heart Disease

1. Golden Tip

- **Pre-fasting medical assessment:**
  Whether a person with heart disease can fast depends on how stable their condition is. Consult your doctor to assess your ability to fast safely.

- **Tests:**
  ECG, echocardiogram, and check for leg swelling or shortness of breath.

- **Fasting is risky and not allowed in the following:**
  recent heart surgery (within the last 6 months), acute heart failure, or unstable angina.

2. Healthy lifestyle and physical activity

Fasting for heart patients can be possible and even beneficial if the condition is stable and under close medical supervision. The main goal is to reduce strain on the heart and prevent sudden changes in blood viscosity.

- **Distribute effort:**
  avoid strenuous physical activity late in the fasting day to prevent stress and dehydration that may increase heart rate.

- **Rest:**
  take a midday rest to avoid exhaustion.

Special Groups

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People with Heart Disease

- **Moderate activity:**
  calm walking two hours after Iftar supports circulation; stop immediately if you feel shortness of breath or chest pain.

3. Nutrition at Iftar and Suhoor

Focus on reducing harmful fats and salt that burden the heart.

Iftar meal:

Avoid saturated fats: fried foods (e.g., fried sambousek) and animal fats like ghee and butter; replace with healthy fats like olive oil.

Grilled protein: skinless chicken or grilled fish (rich in omega-3) at least twice weekly.

Avoid large meals: a heavy Iftar increases blood flow to digestion, potentially straining the heart; consider dividing Iftar into two small meals.

Suhoor meal:

Fibre: whole grains (whole-wheat bread, oats) and vegetables/salad to help reduce cholesterol

Avoid sodium: salt retains fluids and increases cardiac workload; use lemon and herbs for flavour

Fluids (water): Drink water regularly in moderate amounts (one cup per hour) instead of a large amount at once to avoid sudden fluid load on the heart.

Special Groups

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People with Heart Disease

3. Important warnings

- **Medication adjustments:** consult your doctor to adjust timing of blood thinners and rhythm medications to match Iftar and Suhoor times.

- **Diuretics:** Often advised to be consumed at Iftar rather than Suhoor to avoid excessive fluid loss during fasting hours and reduce the risk of dehydration and blood clots. Consult your doctor about the best time to consume diuretics.

- **Weight monitoring:** a sudden weight gain (1 kg or more over two days) may indicate fluid retention and requires medical advice.

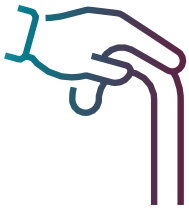
- **Danger signs (when to go to emergency):**

  Stop fasting immediately and seek urgent medical help if you experience:

  1. Chest pain or pressure
  2. Severe shortness of breath
  3. Rapid or irregular palpitations
  4. Sudden swelling in feet/legs
  5. Severe dizziness or loss of consciousness

Special Groups

Older Adults



1. Golden tip:

Older adults can fast after consulting their physicians.

- **Pre-fasting medical assessment:**
  Focuses on general capacity, cognitive function, and assessment of medical conditions.

- **Dehydration:**
  older adults may feel less thirst, increasing risk of kidney failure during fasting.

- **Multiple medications:**
  the doctor reviews all medications to prevent interactions or dosing issues due to changed meal times.

- **Nutrition:**
  ensure adequate vitamin/mineral stores to prevent muscle fatigue.

2. Healthy lifestyle and physical activity

The goal is to meet essential nutritional needs, strengthen immunity, prevent illness, and maintain stability of health status.
The better your health, the more active and well you feel.

Special Groups

Older Adults

- **Sleep and rest:**
  - 6-8 hours of sleep daily
  - Sleep early after Taraweeh when possible
  - Short nap during the day (20-40 minutes)
  - Avoid prolonged late nights to prevent fatigue and dizziness

- **Healthy habits:**
  - Distribute activities throughout the day
  - Do light tasks in the morning
  - Set aside time for rest
  - Avoid high heat exposure to reduce dehydration risk
  - Wear comfortable shoes to prevent falls
  - Move regularly to prevent joint stiffness
  - Do light mental activities (reading, remembrance)
  - Avoid excessive worry and stress

- **Moderate activity:**
  - Light walking two hours after Iftar
  - Simple joint stretches
  - Avoid strenuous effort before Iftar
  - Stop immediately if you feel tired or dizzy

3. Nutrition at Iftar and Suhoor

- Moderate portion size and avoid overeating
- Split food between Iftar and a later time
- Focus on easy-to-digest and easy-to-chew foods
- Chew well and eat slowly

Special Groups

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Older Adults

Iftar meal:

- Start with a cup of water
- 1-3 dates
- Light soup (vegetables or lentils)
- **Main plate:** protein (fish, chicken, grilled meat) or legumes
- **Healthy starches:** brown rice, bulgur, or whole-wheat bread
- Grilled or steamed vegetables or salad
- **Cooking methods:** boil or grill; reduce salt and fat

Suhoor meal:

Essential to reduce fatigue and thirst

- **Protein:** eggs, labneh, or yoghurt
- **Fibre:** fruit/vegetables (apple, banana, cucumber, spinach)
- A cup of milk or laban
- Reduce salt and pickles
- Avoid spicy foods
- Avoid high-sugar drinks

Fluids (water):

6-8 cups distributed between Iftar and Suhoor.

3. Important warnings

- Measure blood pressure and blood sugar regularly as needed
- Take medications on time
- Consult a doctor for any unusual symptoms
- Do not hesitate to break the fast when necessary to protect health

Special Groups

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Pregnant Women

1. Golden tip

Pregnant women may be able to fast during Ramadan after consulting their treating doctor.

- **Pre-fasting medical assessment:**
  Focuses on fetal growth and maternal health.

- **Factors related to the mother, the pregnancy itself, or the fetus may include:**
  age, chronic diseases (diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, kidney disease, thyroid disease), severe obesity or underweight, malnutrition, smoking, and others.

- **Tests:**
  Haemoglobin (anaemia), gestational diabetes tests, urine protein (to detect preeclampsia risk).

- **Ultrasound:**
  confirm amniotic fluid volume and fetal weight.

2. Healthy lifestyle and physical activity

Fasting during Ramadan depends on each woman's health condition. It is essential for a pregnant woman to follow a balanced diet to protect her health and the baby's health. Many tips can support safer fasting during Ramadan, but only after consulting a doctor.

- **Rest and good sleep:**
  - 7-9 hours of sleep daily
  - Short nap during the day (30-40 minutes)

Special Groups

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Pregnant Women

- **Organising the day:**
  - Reduce effort and distribute daily tasks across the day
  - Avoid long standing and exhaustion
  - Reduce stress
  - Stay in moderate temperatures to avoid dehydration

3. Nutrition at Iftar and Suhoor

- Start with a cup of water
- 1-3 dates
- Light soup (vegetables or lentils)
- A balanced healthy plate including all essential nutrients:

Protein: fish, grilled chicken, meat, eggs, or legumes
Healthy starches: brown rice or bread, bulgur, or quinoa
Diverse vegetables (spinach, arugula, cucumber, carrots)

Light snack after Iftar:

- Fresh fruit
- Yoghurt or laban
- A handful of unsalted nuts

Suhoor meal:

Essential for pregnant women
Protein: eggs, labneh, or yoghurt
Fibre: oats or whole-grain bread
Reduce salt and spices to prevent thirst and reflux

- **Fluids (water):**
  - Drink 8-10 cups of water between Iftar and Suhoor in intervals
  - Avoid soft drinks and excessive caffeine (tea/coffee)

Special Groups

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Pregnant Women

4. Important medical warnings

Fasting is not recommended in the following cases:

- Severe anaemia
- Uncontrolled gestational diabetes
- Recurrent low blood pressure
- Severe vomiting
- High-risk pregnancy (higher risk of complications and requiring closer medical follow-up)

When should fasting be broken?

If signs of fatigue, dizziness, and dehydration appear.

Turn Ramadan into an Opportunity to Reset Your Lifestyle

Ramadan is an ideal time to establish healthy long-term habits. Here are tips you can continue after Ramadan:

- **Eat mindfully:** focus on nutrient-dense, balanced foods instead of sugary and high-fat foods.
- **Stay well hydrated:** sufficient water intake supports weight management and stable energy.
- **Keep a regular sleep routine:** aim for a consistent sleep pattern, at least 7 hours for adults.
- **Practice self-discipline:** make reflection part of your daily routine, and build gratitude and self-control.
- **Avoid unhealthy habits:** stop or reduce harmful habits such as smoking, excessive screen time, and fast food.

In summary, Ramadan offers a unique opportunity to build healthy habits when practised mindfully. Ramadan can become not only a spiritual journey, but also a powerful model for improving metabolic health, weight control, mental health, and lifestyle behaviours.

We Wish You a Healthy

& Happy Ramadan