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Achieving Resilient and Inspiring Families

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WELCOME TO THE ARIF TIMES!

Ramadhan is a month of reflection, devotion and fasting for millions of Muslims worldwide, emphasizing spiritual growth and community connection. For families with young children, this month offers an opportunity to instill values of compassion, generosity and faith. While young children may not fast, they can engage in celebrations by learning about Ramadhan's significance and participating in traditions that unite the family.

Incorporating age-appropriate activities, stories and rituals help children grasp Ramadhan's essence, creating lasting memories and a sense of belonging to the community. Preparing *iftar*, decorating for the festive season and teaching charity are ways to involve young ones in the spirit of this blessed month.

Fasting presents unique considerations for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, as their health and the baby's well-being are crucial. While Islam allows exemptions for health struggles, many women choose to fast and seek guidance on doing so safely. Hence, the importance of identifying self risk if any and also seek advice from your dedicated doctor.

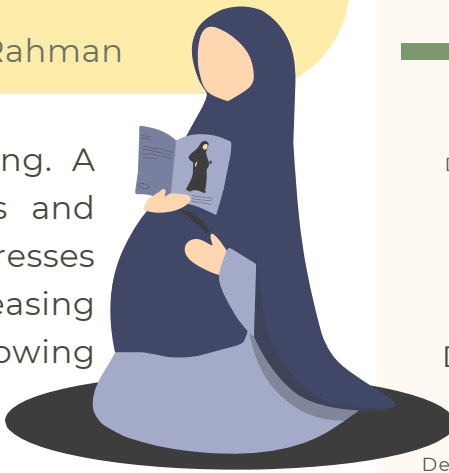
This bulletin provides key advice, medical recommendations and spiritual insights to support your family's health and faith.

Can Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women fast?

by Dr Muhammad Fairuz Abdul Rahman

A pregnancy journey is a blessing. A pregnant woman's body adapts and evolves as the pregnancy progresses until delivery. It requires an increasing supply of nutrients for the growing fetus, including hydration

and calorie intake, which can be challenging during fasting. Similarly, breastfeeding mothers need adequate nutrition to support milk production and their infant's development. Factors like pre-existing health conditions, gestational age and milk supply are important in assessing the safety of fasting.



It is important for any woman to consult her obstetrician. By doing so, she can receive tailored advice regarding the potential risks of fasting for both her and her baby, ensuring she has the best guidance throughout her pregnancy.

Benefits of fasting include:

- Improves medical conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.
- Aids in overcoming habits like smoking and caffeine addiction.
- Detoxifies the body and eliminates stored toxins
- Enhances digestive health, including irritable bowel syndrome.
- Improves sleep quality, reduces inflammation and boosts mental clarity.
- Enhance self-control over hunger and thirst, rejuvenating taste buds.

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Log on to

<https://www.projectarif.sg>
for other Project ARIF
Resources.

Pregnant women with these conditions should AVOID fasting:

- Underlying medical conditions that are not well controlled, and need to be on regular medication(s).
- Underlying pregnancy-related issues like recurrent bleeding in pregnancy, vomiting in pregnancy.
- Any other reasons that can cause a threat to your health or your baby.
- Unable to sustain fasting.
- Any worry for one's health or baby's health during pregnancy.



What can you do if you intend to fast?

- Discuss with your obstetrician if there will be any risk to you and your baby.
- Trial fasting before Ramadhan, e.g gradual duration of fasting.
- Timely *iftar* (i.e: breaking of fast on time).
- Keep hydrated after breaking of fast.
- Do not skip pre-dawn meal, i.e. *sahur*.

Sahur needs to be wholesome to provide enough energy to last during the long hours of fasting. Sahur should include the following foods:

Fruits and vegetables

Rich in fibre, fruits and vegetables are essentials during fasting as they increase the feeling of satiety and help prevent constipation. They also contain vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that are vital for good health.



Rice and alternatives

High-fibre carbohydrate foods like brown rice and wholemeal bread take longer to digest, helping to sustain energy levels longer.

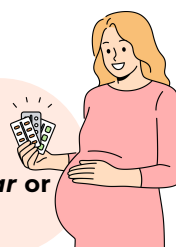


Meat and alternatives

Skinless chicken, fish and low-fat dairy products are a great source of protein while limiting your fat intake. Furthermore, they help repair and build body tissue and build up your immune system. Consuming high-calcium dairy products also helps maintain strong bones. Those who are lactose intolerant can choose lactose-free milk or calcium-fortified soybean milk.



Continue taking multivitamins
(take them during either *iftar* or *sahur*)



Other recommendations while fasting include:



- Keep active or 'moving', yet not to overexert.
- Break the fast if you feel faint, dizzy, or light-headed, if the baby is not moving, or if you have any doubts that continuing the fast may affect you or your baby.



Can breastfeeding mothers fast?



The same considerations apply to breastfeeding mothers. Research indicates that fasting while breastfeeding does not impact the nutrient levels in breastmilk or the growth of babies. However, fasting may lead to lower water intake and energy levels. While some mothers might experience a decrease in milk supply, babies naturally respond by feeding more, which can help maintain or even boost the mother's milk production. Generally,

the nutrient composition of breastmilk is not significantly influenced by a mother's diet. Therefore, it is essential for breastfeeding mothers to stay well-hydrated and maintain a balanced diet after breaking their fast and before the next fasting period.

It is important to tailor the decision to fast to individual circumstances, medical conditions, and the needs of the nursing baby. Mothers should ensure they are well-rested to effectively nurse their infants. If at any point a mother feels unwell or experiences symptoms that affect her ability to care for her baby, she should not hesitate to break her fast.

Fasting during pregnancy and breastfeeding is a deeply personal decision, balancing spiritual practices with maternal and child health. Both stages involve unique nutritional demands, making it essential to approach fasting thoughtfully. Religious teachings often provide flexibility, allowing pregnant or breastfeeding women to opt for alternatives, such as compensatory fasting later or charitable acts like feeding the poor. This ensures spiritual fulfilment without compromising health.



If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and considering fasting, it is essential to listen to your body and consult with a healthcare professional. Proper preparation, balanced nutrition and hydration strategies can help ensure both you and your baby remain healthy throughout Ramadhan. Understanding the signs of dehydration, fatigue or low blood sugar is crucial to making informed decisions about fasting.

A Guide for Religious Fasting in Older Children

by Dr Nur Adila Ahmad Hatib



Young children are not required to fast during Ramadhan. From a medical point-of-view, young children need sufficient calories and fluids from food and drink to ensure a healthy body and mind. At a young age, they are more prone to encounter problems from a lack of fluids (dehydration) and low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). In severe cases, both these conditions can lead to damage to organs like the brain and kidneys. At a young age, it is more important to teach our children about the month of Ramadhan and the importance of fasting so that they understand and are mentally prepared to do so when they are older.



Nevertheless, for those who are older and approaching puberty, parents may wish to start them on “practice” fasts to prepare them for controlling their hunger and thirst. If you choose to do so, ensure that your child does not miss *sahur* (pre-dawn meal). A proper and nutritious *sahur* with plenty of fluids is essential to last your child for the period of fasting. Advise them to have adequate rest during the day and avoid strenuous physical activities. If your child encounters these warning signs, get them to stop their fast immediately:



Headache

Feeling faint

Lethargy

Dizziness

Looks pale

A balanced diet is very important for both *sahur* and when breaking the fast, *iftar*. Prepare foods from each food group so that your child will have enough carbohydrates, proteins, fibre, vitamins and minerals.



Have more fruits, vegetables and wholegrains and less processed foods or items that have high salt and fat content (e.g. hot dogs, nuggets). Drink plenty of water and minimise drinks that are sugar-sweetened or carbonated (soft drinks).



Follow the healthy plate recommendations from healthhub.sg. As parents, let's start with ourselves as good role models for our children to instil good values in Ramadhan and any other day to nurture our children to be a better generation.

Fasting: A Spiritual Rejuvenation in Islam

by Ustaz Syakir Pasuni



Have you ever wondered how Muslims all over the world manage to fast during daylight hours for 30 days while also praying an additional 23 *raka'ats* (unit of Islamic prayers) every night?



The strength to do this does not simply come from resolution, but it draws from the spiritual strength that is born through fasting.

Fasting during Ramadhan goes beyond simply abstaining from food and drink; it is an act of devotion, avoiding not only consumption but also behaviours that invalidate the fast. By reducing physical intake, we intentionally weaken our bodies to combat desires for bodily pleasures, allowing our spiritual side to strengthen.

This daily practice purifies our souls, cleanses our sins, and deepens our faith and connection with Allah, which is the ultimate goal and reward of fasting. Any spiritual rejuvenation that does not bring us closer to Allah or help us become better Muslims lack real benefits. Understanding this concept enables us to truly learn from fasting, fostering detachment from worldly comforts and reminding us of our dependence on Allah.

In the evenings, we partake in *Tarawih* prayers and find solace in the recitation of the Qur'an and reflecting on its meanings. Through the pre-dawn prayers such as *Tahajjud* we experience closeness to Allah. When sins darken our hearts, sincerity and devotion illuminate them.



By the end of Ramadhan, our bodies are disciplined, hearts are purified, and souls are renewed. Fasting is not merely a religious obligation; it is a process of spiritual transformation, leaving us with a heightened state of *Taqwa* and closeness to Allah, better preparing us to face challenges in the year ahead.



Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu 'alayhi wa Sallam said, "Whoever fasts during Ramadhan with sincere faith and hope for Allah's pleasure, his sins shall be forgiven; and whoever stands for prayer on Laylatul Qadr with sincere faith and hope for Allah's pleasure, his past sins shall be forgiven."

May Allah accept our deeds and grant us our supplications(du'as).



Mindfulness in Fasting

by 'Abidah binte Yahya

Incorporating mindfulness in fasting can enhance the fasting experience as it promotes self-awareness and compassion, improves emotional regulation, increases endurance and patience. Essentially, it helps you stay present in the moment, paying close attention to your surrounding and internal experiences while fasting.

How does mindfulness enhance these experiences?

Emotional Regulation

When fasting, our mood can sometimes be affected by hunger, fatigue or dehydration, leading to feelings of edginess or irritability. Practising mindfulness can help us manage these emotions by fostering awareness and preventing impulsive reactions. Techniques such as deep breathing and meditation can effectively stabilise our emotions during these challenging moments.



Mental Clarity and Focus

As we go through our daily routines, we may be overwhelmed with lists of responsibilities or tasks to accomplish. For an instance, juggling between work and caregiving duties can be stressful to an individual and this may affect the mental quality and concentration level. Therefore, it is imperative to be mindful of our thoughts and sense of purpose to reduce any form of mental distractions. By focusing on being fully present, aware of the present moment without judgement, it can help improve the individual's productivity and cognitive functioning during fasting.

Resilience and self-control

Fasting demands discipline and self-restraint. For someone struggling with a smoking habit, it can be challenging to resist the urge to smoke. However, practising mindfulness can bolster determination and will power, helping individuals resist cravings and discomfort. Cultivating positive intentions, reminding oneself to be patient and fostering a conscious relationship with oneself can also help redirect attention away from these temptations.



Sense of Community and Belonging

Sharing and caring for one another fosters a sense of gratitude and belonging. When we share meals with another family or assist in serving *iftar* at the mosque, it strengthens social cohesion and appreciation for communal togetherness. This interaction deepens our connections and promotes inclusivity, encouraging acts of kindness and solidarity within the community. Throughout this experience, mindfulness can help us in being intentional as we contribute to charity and volunteer efforts, enhancing our sense of social responsibility and compassion.

Improved Relationship and Empathy

Mindful fasting encourages individuals to develop patience and understanding, improving interactions with others. Often, we may not realise that our words or communication style can hurt others; therefore, practising kindness in our conversations and actively listening can help avoid unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings. This mindfulness heightens our self-awareness, allowing us to pay attention to our thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations during interactions.

Consequently, integrating mindfulness with fasting can help individuals transform their fasting experience into a more meaningful, peaceful and fulfilling one.

Have a meaningful and healthy Ramadhan everyone!

Love, Project ARIF.