

THE FACTS ABOUT ◆ FASTING DURING RAMADAN ◆

The Islamic month of Ramadan is one of the longest periods of religious fasting. During this time, Muslims abstain from eating, drinking, and taking medications from before sunrise to sunset.

Despite medical and religious guidelines stating that most people with diabetes are exempt from religious fasting because of the increased associated health risks, more than 50 million people with diabetes make the personal decision to fast during Ramadan.

If you are living with type 2 diabetes and choose to fast during the holy month, it is important to schedule an appointment with your healthcare professional before Ramadan to ensure that you are prepared to control your blood sugar levels throughout the fasting period.



Visit your healthcare professional

During the pre-Ramadan medical assessment, you should expect to have your general well-being checked, as well as your blood sugar, blood pressure, and lipids. It will also be a good opportunity to discuss your medication and any changes that may need to be made before Ramadan, along with what you should do if you experience complications during fasting.

Your healthcare professional may provide you with individually tailored advice to help minimize the risks associated with fasting – this might include:



Changes to diabetes medication



More frequent monitoring of blood sugar levels



Meal planning



Exercise



How to recognize and manage potential risks



When to break the fast



Consider the effects of fasting

It is important that people with type 2 diabetes understand that they face increased health risks when fasting because of the changes to their eating patterns. These include:



Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, which occurs when the level of sugar in the blood drops below normal.



Hyperglycemia, or high blood sugar, which occurs when there is too much sugar in the blood and can be caused by excessive reductions in doses of diabetes medications, or an increase in food or sugar intake.



Dehydration, or excessive loss of body fluid, can be caused by limited fluid intake.



Thrombosis, or clotting of the blood within a vein, may occur with dehydration.



It is important to monitor your condition closely during Ramadan and check your blood sugar periodically as directed by your healthcare professional. Remember to break your fast if your blood sugar is: less than $<4.0\text{mmol/L}$ in the first few hours after the start of fasting; or higher than $>15.0\text{mmol/L}$



Talk to family and friends

On many evenings during Ramadan, family and friends gather to open the fast. If you have type 2 diabetes, it is a good idea to talk to the person in charge of the meal about preparing foods that can help you manage your blood sugar levels by allowing a slow release of energy. Here are some simple tips to consider during Ramadan:



At Suhr, try slow release energy foods such as brown bread, semolina and beans.



Avoid foods high in saturated fat, such as ghee, samosas and pakoras.



At Iftar, consume fruits, followed by slow-acting carbohydrates such as brown rice, oats and vegetables.



Increase your fluid intake during non-fasting hours and especially at Suhr and Iftar.

Glossary

Suhr (Suhoor) – A small meal traditionally eaten before dawn (or around midnight) during Ramadan; the final meal before the day's fast begins

Iftar – A meal served at the end of the day during Ramadan, to open the day's fast



Keep in touch with your healthcare professional

