

Ramadan Health Fact Sheet

MSCP

Muslim Spiritual
Care Provision
in the NHS

PO BOX 57330 | T 020 7492 4983
LONDON E1 2WJ | F 020 7247 7079
E NHSSPIRITUALCARE@MCB.ORG.UK

FASTING in the month of Ramadan is obligatory on all Muslim adults. This year many patients and staff will begin their fast from around the 1st of August*. It helps if NHS staff understand and respect this religious practice and how it may affect care. This is also more relevant in hospitals where Muslim chaplain services are not available.

Here is a brief summary of the issues relevant to doctors, staff and patients:

What is a fast?

The Fast lasts between dawn and sunset. It is compulsory for all healthy adult Muslims on reaching puberty; it is a total fast, with complete abstinence from food and drink.

How fast becomes void/broken?

- 1 Eating or drinking intentionally
- 2 Taking oral medication
- 3 Smoking
- 4 Using rectal pessaries

Beginning and end time of fast

- 1 Ramadhan time table could be obtained from local Mosques.
- 2 The Guardian newspaper publishes time table supplied by the Muslim Council of Britain throughout Ramadhan in their Weather section.

Who is exempted from the fast?

- 1 All those who are ill (physical or mental illness) or frail.
- 2 Pregnant and menstruating women.
- 3 Lactating women who have concerns about their own, or their child's health.
- 4 Travellers
(Despite being in the above categories, some prefer not to miss these Fasts with the possibility of greater reward, as the rewards for fasts are limitless.)

The patient's perspective

- 1 The patient's choice should be respected and advice should be offered on medical grounds. Muslim Chaplain/Imam should be consulted where available.
- 2 If possible, hospital appointments should be given at appropriate times (i.e. outside prayer times – the Muslim patient will be aware of these times) or at the ending of the fast.
- 3 Arrangements for breaking of Fast – availability of quiet prayer space at prayer times would be appreciated.

What does not break the fast?

- 1 Injections (intravenous, intramuscular and subcutaneous).
- 2 Bloods taken (thumb prick or intravenous).
- 3 Eye and ear drops.
- 4 Using vaginal pessaries or nicotine patches.
- 5 Eating and drinking out of forgetfulness.

* Subject to the sighting of the moon.
* Prepared by Mufti Zubair Butt, Shariah Advisor to the Muslim Spiritual care Provision in the NHS.

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