



Ramadan occurs in the 9th Islamic calendar, which was when the Quran (the holy book) was first revealed to Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon him PBUH). The exact dates change each year due to the calendar being based on the cycles of the moon and not the Gregorian calendar we know.

Ramadan is a month of fasting and abstaining from things that can be considered impure and unkind. From dawn to sunset, those partaking in Ramadan abstain from food, water and impure thoughts and instead focus on their 5 daily (mandatory) prayers. The month aims to reset old or bad habits and encourages us to move forward with good deeds. Observing fasts and praying are 2 of the 5 pillars of Islam.

Although Ramadan is a spiritual journey and a time of self-reflection there are also recognised health benefits including:

- Improved metabolism
- Weight loss
- Lower Cholesterol
- Detoxification of the body

Those who are elderly, menstruating, pregnant, breastfeeding, unwell, or travelling are not obliged to fast. If someone is unable to fast due to the above, they should EITHER pay "fidya" which is essentially feeding families in poverty, or they can replace missed fasts later in the year.

A Day Fasting

Additional Prayer & Activities

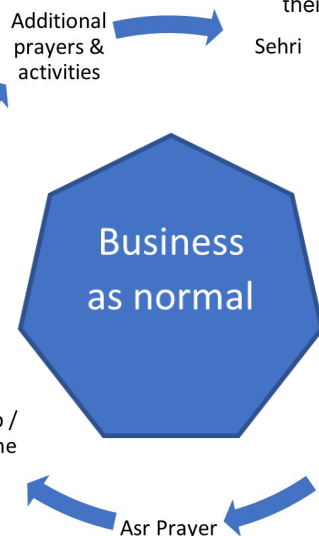
Due to the holy month Muslims will endeavour to complete additional prayers, (especially during the night and during the last 10 days of Ramadan), read the Quran and donate to charity.

Isha & Taraweeh

The final obligatory prayer of the day is Isha (9:30-10:00). During Ramadan an additional prayer is completed with Isha for the full month, although not compulsory it is practised by many.

Maghrib / Iftar Time

This ranges from 7:40 pm to 8:40pm. This prayer is related to sunset and therefore also corresponds to "Iftar" which means breaking fast. It is common practise to do so with dates and water in line with the practice of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). On breaking a fast, Maghrib prayers are completed prior to enjoying a feast with family and friends.



Sehri

Refers to the time when fasting starts. Within the month this ranges from 3.45am - 5am. Beyond which time Muslims are unable to eat or drink till dusk. Muslims will therefore wake up for their breakfast and try and consume a substantial meal and fluids to sustain them for the full day.

Fajr Prayer

Approximately 10 minutes after Sehri the first prayer of the day is completed. Some of us try to go back to bed after this before it is time to wake up again; whilst others may prefer to stay awake.

Zuhr Prayer

The second prayer of the day is around lunch time. On Fridays this prayer is called Jummah and is celebrated and attended by many at the mosque.

Asr Prayer

(5pm- 6pm) Third prayer of the day is when the sun is halfway down from noon to sunset.

Each prayer varies in length and can be practised at home or at the mosque as per individual preference, although praying in congregation is encouraged. The expectation is not to delay or miss a prayer.

FAQ

Can you brush your teeth?

Although debated this comes down to individual choice. Some would argue this could lead to accidental sips of water being consumed

Do children fast?

There is no real age and should depend on the child themselves, however the accepted age is that of puberty

Do you enjoy Ramadan?

Being stripped of your necessities of food, water and sleep for a whole month can be quite hard, however I feel very empowered and energised by Ramadan. I feel blessed to be able to enjoy a lovely feast at the end of the day and it just reminds me of how lucky I am to be here, where others are less fortunate. I am resilient and it encourages me to let go of any negativity I am carrying.

Challenges

Although extremely rewarding the month itself can pose some challenges including:

- Fatigue and lethargy
- Headaches
- Sleep deprivation
- Dehydration
- Withdrawals from caffeine
- Missing out on social events
- Missing out on work buffets (Pre covid)
- Inability to exercise
- Altered resilience
- Altered bowel habits
- Heart burn
- Feeling irritable/forgetful
- Refraining from smoking
- Consideration of diet to ensure adequate nutrition and hydration



Zakat

As one of the 5 pillars of Islam this is an obligation that an individual must donate 2.5% of wealth (savings) each year to charitable causes before the end of Ramadan. The month of Ramadan can be quite humbling which allows those partaking in it to understand the suffering of millions leading to generous and willing donations.

Eid Ul Fitr (2nd May)

Celebrates the end of the holy month. The exact day is determined by the sighting of the moon, which occasionally lends to 29 days of fasting instead of 30.

The day begins with a special Eid prayer, family visits, gift-giving and charity. It takes place over one to three days.

The overall aim of this month is to bring us closer to God, our families & our communities, whilst purifying ourselves from negativity. It demands willpower, restraint and a strong belief in its purpose. Patience, forgiveness and gratitude are essential for an individual to fully benefit from Ramadan.

We would like to wish everyone a blessed Ramadan for the remaining days, and Eid Mubarak to you and yours.

By Naheed Ahmed & Mai Hussain