

What you need to know about managing diabetes during Ramadan



Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is an important spiritual practice. However, major changes in your eating and sleep schedule may result in a risk of high or low blood sugar or dehydration.

This brochure contains important advice to help you minimise your risk of complications caused by fasting during Ramadan.

Recommendations from the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and the Diabetes & Ramadan International Alliance (DAR) for diabetics who want to fast during Ramadan



Important Q&As about fasting with diabetes

Can I fast?



1

If you want to fast during Ramadan, you should **make an appointment with your doctor 6 to 8 weeks** before Ramadan begins.



2

Your **doctor** will review your medical history and ask you **questions about your individual circumstances** to assess whether fasting is a good idea for you. This is called a risk assessment.



3

Based on your risk assessment, your **doctor will make recommendations** about how to manage your diabetes during Ramadan.

Important: Have a consultation with your doctor every year before deciding to fast.

How often should I check my blood sugar?



Altered eating habits during Ramadan can affect blood sugar levels. It is therefore important to check blood sugar levels regularly.

If doctors think you may have an increased risk of hypoglycaemia, your blood sugar should be checked several times a day. Even with a lower risk, blood sugar levels should be checked at least 1–2 times a day.

Blood glucose should be checked several times a day during treatment with insulin or sulfonylurea (tablets). Measurements should be taken 2–3 times daily if you are taking mixed insulin.

Your doctor will be able to advise you when and how often you should check your blood sugar during Ramadan.

Remember: You must also continue to check your blood sugar while fasting.

When should I stop fasting?



You should stop fasting **immediately** if:

- Your blood sugar is **less than 70 mg/dL (<3.9 mmol/L)**. Check again within one hour if your blood sugar level is 70–90 mg/dL (3.9–5.0 mmol/L).
- Your blood sugar level is **greater than 300 mg/dL (>16.6 mmol/L)**.
- You have symptoms of low or high blood sugar, dehydration or an acute illness (e.g. fever, diarrhoea, vomiting and/or fatigue).

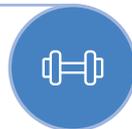
If you stop fasting because your blood sugar is too low, you should consume a small amount of fast-acting carbohydrates, such as some juice, and measure your blood sugar again after 15–20 minutes.

Will I need to adjust my medication during Ramadan?



Talk to your doctor about any adjustments you need to make to the type, dose and timing of your medications to minimise the risk of hypoglycaemia.

Should I exercise during Ramadan?



Try to maintain your normal level of physical activity during Ramadan.

Diabetics are advised to do light to moderate exercise during Ramadan. Due to the increased risk of hypoglycaemia and/or dehydration, avoiding strenuous exercise during fasting is recommended.

Physical exertion associated with the *Tarawih* prayer, such as bending, kneeling and getting up, should be considered part of your daily exercise activity.

Meal planning during Ramadan for diabetics

Divide the daily calories between *Iftar*[#] and *Suhoor*^{*}, plus 1 – 2 snacks if needed

Make sure meals are balanced:

45–50%

Carbohydrates

20–30%

Protein

<35%

Fat

Eat high-fibre foods before and after fasting that slowly release energy

For example, wholemeal bread, beans, and rice



Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and salads



Keep the consumption of animal fat to a minimum

For example, no or only a small amount of ghee, cream, meat, fried food



Avoid sugary desserts

Replace sugary desserts with healthy desserts in moderation, e.g. fruit



Only use small amounts of oil when cooking

For example, olive or rapeseed oil



Hydrate sufficiently between sunset and sunrise

Drink water and unsweetened drinks



Avoid caffeinated and sweetened drinks



[#] the evening meal after sunset during Ramadan

^{*} the last meal before sunrise during Ramadan

Tips for Ramadan:



If you want to fast, you should see your doctor before Ramadan to monitor and protect your health.



Eat *Suhoor** as late as possible, especially if you are fasting for more than 10 hours.



At the end of Ramadan, especially during *Eid al-Fitr*§, you should not eat too much (especially sweet and sugary foods), as this can lead to high blood sugar.



After Ramadan, see your doctor for advice on how to adjust your medication to your previous regimen.

Remember

Monitoring blood sugar is an important aspect of diabetes treatment, and it must also be checked while fasting. Knowing your blood sugar levels and taking your medications as prescribed by your doctor will help you to manage your diabetes.

* the last meal before sunrise during Ramadan

§ the festival of breaking the fast immediately after the month of fasting

Details of the evidence to support these recommendations can be found at www.idf.org/our-activities/education/diabetes-and-ramadan

Diabetes and Ramadan: Practical Guidelines, International Diabetes Federation (IDF), in collaboration with the Diabetes and Ramadan (DAR) International Alliance. January 2021. Available at: www.idf.org/news/idf-dar-diabetes-in-ramadan-guidelines

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sanofi



International
Diabetes
Federation

sanofi-aventis GmbH
Turm A, 29. OG
Wienerbergstraße 11
1100 Wien, Österreich

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