

FASTING WITH DIABETES: WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW

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Fasting for diabetics is approached differently by doctors and usually poses a challenge for patients and physicians. In many cases, especially with patients who suffer from type 1 diabetes, physicians advise against fasting. However, when diabetic patients make the decision to fast, there are a few key things to keep in mind, in order to stay healthy and avoid any major complications.

What are the risks of fasting for people with diabetes?

Three essential risks associated with fasting should be clearly explained to diabetes patients:

Low blood sugar: Symptoms include tremors, sweating, numbness in the fingers, lips or tongue, heart palpitations, hunger, headaches, difficulty concentrating and speaking, abnormal behaviour, lack of consciousness

High blood sugar: Symptoms include thirst, increased urination, headaches, fatigue

Dehydration: Symptoms include headaches, dry mouth and skin, dizziness, low urine output

Should diabetic patients fast during Ramadan?

Patients with diabetes should meet with their doctor prior to Ramadan, in order to receive an assessment of their condition and to determine the patient's risk level in terms of fasting. There are three main risk levels:

High risk patients: (strongly advised against fasting)

Those with severe and recurrent episodes of hypoglycaemia.

Those with poor glycaemic control.

Those with ketoacidosis in the three months before Ramadan.

Diabetic patients with ongoing infections.

All pregnant diabetic patients.

Elderly patients.

Those who perform intense physical activities.

Those with comorbidities such as renal disease on dialysis, uncontrolled hypertension, cognitive dysfunction or uncontrolled epilepsy.

Moderate risk patients: (advised not to fast)

Well controlled patients treated with short acting insulin, sulphonylurea, insulin, or taking combination oral or oral plus insulin treatment.

Low risk patients: (can fast with precautions)

Well controlled patients treated with diet alone, monotherapy with metformin (Glucophage), dipeptidyl peptidase-4 inhibitors (Januvia) or thiazolidinediones who are otherwise healthy.

How can diabetes be managed when fasting?

Following the initial assessment, and once you have been given an ok from your doctor for fasting, there are a number of guidelines that you need to be aware of:

Arrange a pre Ramadan consultation with your family doctor. Following the initial assessment where you will be able to review your control and determine the feasibility of fasting safely.

Consult a dietician. The diet during Ramadan should be a healthy balanced diet and preferably contains slow energy release foods (like rice) and high fibre foods (like grain cereals and brown rice). Avoid excessive overeating, or compensatory eating of carbohydrates and fatty foods. Benefits from Ramadan fasting are greater in those who maintain appropriate diets.

Monitor your blood sugar before and 2 hours after Iftar, before Sohur, and at midday. Also, if symptoms of hypoglycaemia are suspected, or if you are feeling unwell in general, then break the fast if hypoglycaemia is confirmed on blood glucose testing.

Recognise possible complications and ways to manage them. Patients should be aware of the warning symptoms of dehydration, hypoglycaemia, and hyperglycaemia and should stop the fast as soon as any complications or acute illness occur.

Record weight daily. Make sure to inform your doctor of any change of more than 2kg.

Continue to exercise. Regular light and moderate exercise is safe in type 2 diabetes patients. Rigorous exercises are not recommended because of the risk of hypoglycaemia.

Take medication regularly.

Do not overeat and minimise eating sweet and fatty foods.

Record daily diet intake. This is important to help prevent excessive or very low consumption.

Revisit your doctor after Ramadan.

Health tips for diabetic patients:

The type of insulin may need changing from your usual type.

Pre-mixed insulin is not usually recommended during fasting.

If you are on insulin, you will require less insulin before the start of the fast.

At Sohur, you should include slower absorbed food such as basmati rice, in your meal - along with fruit and vegetables.

Check your blood glucose levels more often than usual.

When you break the fast, have only small quantities of food, and avoid eating sweets or fatty foods.

Give up or reduce smoking 2 weeks before Ramadan starts.

Plan your schedule and meals ahead of time in order to make sure you get the nutrients, fluids, and rest needed.

Eat Suhoor as late as possible, ideally just prior to dawn, this will compensate for the missed usual morning breakfast.

Do not overeat, break the fasting with water or yogurt and divide the amount you are going to eat into small servings during the evening.

Decrease your caffeine intake and switch to decaffeinated drinks at least a week before Ramadan to help your body adjust.

At the end of fasting you should drink plenty of sugar-free and decaffeinated fluids to avoid being dehydrated.



GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL CELEBRATES RAMADAN IN LONDON

FORTY FAMILIES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST ARE AT THE HOSPITAL

LONDON: Every year Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children (GOSH) in London prepares for Ramadan with its staff and families. As a multicultural city, many of the staff and UK families fast over Ramadan along with families from the Middle East, and the hospital works hard to accommodate people of all faiths and cultures. "Ramadan is a beautiful month," says a mother from Kuwait, "we plan to celebrate it exactly the same in the hospital as we would normally." To help families do this GOSH is putting on extra services and facilities.

Recognising the long hours required for fasting over Ramadan in the UK summertime, and the importance of Iftar, the hospital is offering food facilities until 11pm, as well as providing vending machines with halal food options across the hospital. The catering team are also providing extra halal food options, including new snacks such as dates, yoghurt and baklava. "It's important to understand and support our colleagues and patients in such times, and promote an understanding within teams." Said Simon Clark, Head of Catering at GOSH.

The hospital is also providing extra room to facilitate prayer over Ramadan, with an extra prayer area put aside inside the hospital including a segregated area for women, as well their normal multi-faith room. The hospital's multi-faith Chaplaincy team is always available for all staff, families and children, and there are two Muslim chaplains in the team. "My experience of Ramadan at the hospital is very good," said Aboubakr Elsayed, Arabic Patient Liaison Manager, "all the staff and my colleagues are really supportive of me and it makes me happy inside, and is really helpful to me when I am fasting for a long time. I also have the support of my managers and I really appreciate it."

Every month GOSH hosts a Mother's Tea Party run by one of the hospital's female Muslim Arabic Interpreting Assistants. "It is

used in the posters and invitations for the Eid al Fitr party as well as being given a prize. Great Ormond Street Hospital in London is recognized as one of the few truly world-class hospitals for children. As a global leader, GOSH has top clinical and research experts working every day to find new and better ways to treat children. While breakthroughs and medical expertise are essential to the treatment of



very good," a mother commented "the soup and rice dishes were excellent." The mothers shared the food with their husbands and children back on the ward and feedback was given to the catering team.

The hospital is also planning an Eid al Fitr party in July and are running an Eid al Fitr colouring competition for all children in the hospital across Ramadan. The winner of the competition will have their winning art work

patients, GOSH also places great emphasis on the support and care provided for children by nurturing an open and supportive atmosphere, ensuring that parents and patients are well informed and closely involved in the treatment process. Children receive the highest standards of care and attention from the expert team of medical and support staff during their stay at GOSH, and are always treated with respect, trust, concern and openness.

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