

RAMADAN 2020

RAMADAN AT HOME

STAY HOME, SAVE LIVES

"The month of Ramadan (is the month) in which the Qur'an has been sent down as guidance for mankind containing clear signs which lead (to the straight road) and distinguishing (the truth from falsehood).. " [Quran 2:185]

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Ramadan 2020 will take place between 23/24 April & 23/24 May (depending on moon sightings), and will prove a very different experience for Muslims due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This pack contains guidelines and advice, signposting resources to help Muslims in Britain make the most of the blessed month, as well as friends, neighbours and colleagues of Muslims.

WHAT IS RAMADAN?

The month of Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic year as it is when the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Muslims around the world fast during daylight hours, meaning they abstain from eating, drinking or engaging in sexual relations for the duration of their fast. Young children, the old, the sick, travellers and women who are breastfeeding or menstruating are examples of those who are exempt from fasting. Aside from fasting, Muslims observing Ramadan also increase in spiritual devotional acts such as prayer, giving to charity and strengthening family ties. Muslims are encouraged to share their food with friends, family and neighbours and to reach out to those who may be fasting alone, to share their Ramadan experiences.





WHAT'S THE REASON FOR FASTING?

Fasting plays an important role in many major world religions and is a central feature in all the Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In Islam, Muslims, who are able to, are required to fast during the month of Ramadan, and are recommended to fast at other times of the year too. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam. A key objective of fasting increase in *taqwa* (closeness to God), and to engender a sense of gratitude, self-discipline and self-improvement, at both an individual and community level, which Muslims are encouraged to continue throughout the year. At an individual level, fasting encourages us to feel an affinity with the poor across the world who have little or no food to eat, whilst for our own bodies, scientific studies have shown that fasting provides several health benefits and forms of intermittent fasting have been incorporated into several diet regimes. At a community level, the breaking of fast meal (*iftar*) at sunset encourages families and local communities to share their meal together, whilst charity work in local communities typically increases during Ramadan.

IS FASTING HARMFUL TO YOUR HEALTH?

If you are healthy with no pre-existing conditions, there is no evidence to suggest fasting is harmful to your health provided you are adequately hydrated in non-fasting hours. Some studies suggest there may even be health benefits from fasting. For those who usually drink caffeine through tea or coffee, the lack of caffeine can bring on headaches and tiredness. However, this will reduce as the body adapts to going without caffeine during the day. Due to the timings of meals before dawn and after sunset, adjustment to new sleeping and eating patterns may also lead to some people feeling more tired than normal. If you have any queries regarding health during this Ramadan, contact the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) on: ramadan@britishima.org





IMPACT OF COVID-19 - #RAMADANATHOME

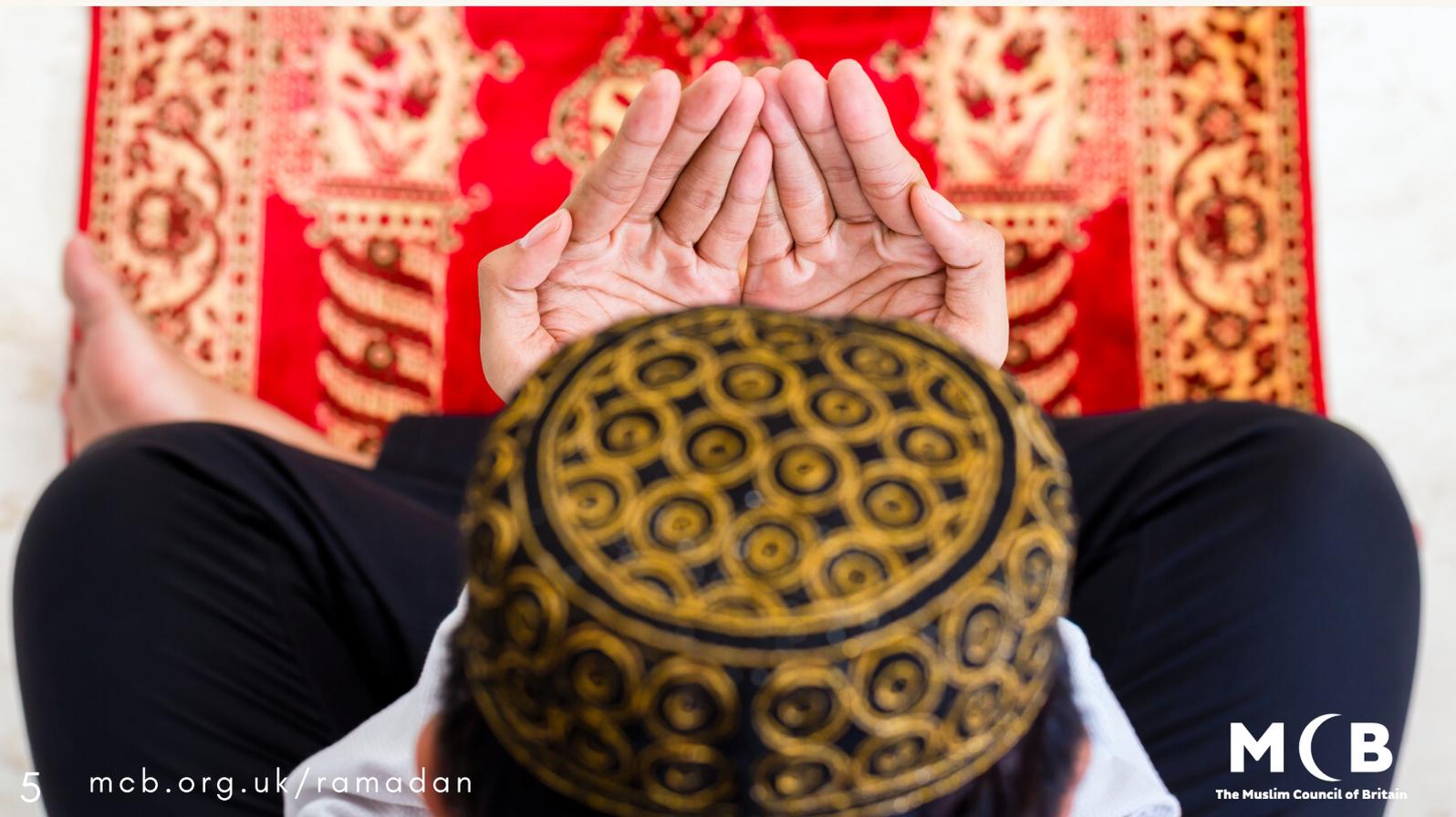
Ramadan 2020 will be a very different experience for Muslims as we adapt to changing circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic, adjusting not only our holy month but our daily lives in accordance with public health guidelines.

This Ramadan, it is unlikely that social distancing measures will be lifted, enabling us to return to our normal routines. Thus, it is unlikely that there will be congregational acts of worship for Muslims outside of the home – no *taraweeh* prayers at the mosque or anywhere outside of our homes, no spiritual talks in the community or *iftars* with friends and family to attend. We will all be seeking to adapt to these changes while still enjoying the spiritual lift and community spirit that Ramadan provides.

HOW TO ADAPT OUR RAMADAN

It is important to plan our Ramadan activities given these restrictions. Consider:

- Organising *taraweeh* at home as a family and pray in congregation. See the Useful Links section for a comprehensive guide to performing *taraweeh* at home by the National Huffadh Association UK.
- Streaming Islamic lectures or *taraweeh* in your home, either pre-recorded or live.
- Arranging virtual *iftars* with loved ones and community members through the many online video calling facilities available.
- Planning your *iftar* menus in advance so that you can limit multiple shopping trips given social distancing measures.
- Hydrating well for the long fasting days. Dehydration can lead to tiredness, headaches, lack of focus/concentration.
- Eating high energy, slow burn foods for *suhoor* (starting your fast).
- Remaining energised throughout the workday, especially as we can experience heightened levels of anxiety during these times.
- Taking regular breaks to reflect and take time for yourself. Life can be full, and we try to fill it with more worship during Ramadan. We all want to pray more and this can help with anxiety but it is important to be good to yourself - sometimes it is quality over quantity.





COVID-19: WORKING FROM HOME

Many Muslims are likely to be working from home during this time. While this may have benefits and provide ease in some ways to those fasting, it can also provide some new challenges. Consider the following:

- Ensuring you are taking regular breaks from work for rest and reflection – perhaps around *salaah* (prayer) times.
- Starting your day earlier if you are permitted to so that you can finish earlier and have some down time prior to *iftar*.
- Giving your employer and colleagues advance notice that you will be fasting.
- Sharing Ramadan with colleagues by having a conversation or sharing what you're doing for it, what food you're preparing, and what the month means for you.
- Honouring your workplace duties with patience and good grace to those around you.
- Taking a break if you find yourself frustrated or tired.

Employees who are fasting may ask to take their lunch break at a later time to break their fast depending on their work timings, or to enable them to finish work earlier. Employers may be justified in refusing such a request if this conflicts with legitimate business needs which they are unable to meet in any other ways. However, if they are unable to objectively justify such a refusal, this could amount to unlawful indirect discrimination.

COVID-19: STUDYING FROM HOME

Much like working from home, studying from home without the benefit of your classmates and direct face to face time with your lecturers can have its own challenges. Fasting may tire you out further, and dehydration is often a factor in reducing focus and concentration. Much like with working from home, consider:

- Giving your university, student advisor or professors advance notice that you will be fasting.
- Ensuring you are taking regular breaks from studying for rest and reflection – perhaps around *salaah* times. Set yourself a study timetable.
- Taking into account *salaah* and *iftar* times, as well as class lecture times, when structuring your day.
- Starting the day earlier if your timetable allows you to so that you can finish earlier and have some down time prior to *iftar*.
- Sharing Ramadan with classmates and friends by having a conversation about Ramadan, or sharing what you're doing for it, what food you're preparing, and what the month means for you.
- Honouring your studies and commitments with patience and good grace to those around you. Should you find yourself frustrated or tired, take a break.

