

# 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 is 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.







## COVID-19: IFTARS AT HOME

*"But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not." (2:216)*

While we are all longing for the opportunity to get together as families for *iftar* and share in the blessings together, it is vital that we continue to follow UK Government guidance and only remain with those that we live with until otherwise stated. Though this will mean that we are not able to physically get together as a community during Ramadan, it is for the safety and wellbeing of our loved ones that we must heed these warnings. We must remember that as Muslims, everything is a test from Allah, and it is up to us how we choose to respond to such tests.

# COVID-19: VIRTUAL IFTARS

Due to the likely inability to host in-person *iftars* this Ramadan, one way to still connect with friends and loved ones is to host a 'virtual *iftars*', in which individuals or families can join via video conferencing facilities like Zoom, FaceTime or video-calling apps like Skype or WhatsApp. This could be an important way for individuals to stay connected during these times, especially for those who are living alone or away from family.

It is vital in these times that we encourage ourselves and our communities to adapt and make the most out of our circumstances, even though they may be difficult. It is a great time to practice gratitude and remember that others who are less fortunate may not have families to celebrate with as it is, and we can at least find comfort in knowing that we will be reunited with ours when this has all passed, God willing.







## CAUTION WHEN SHOPPING

The Prophet (pbuh) said in plain terms: "He who hoards is a sinner" (Muslim)

Though it is typical for families to stock up on products for meals during the month of fasting, we should remain conscious of the difficult circumstances we all face now with the pandemic and ensure that we only purchase in reasonable quantities which allow for everyone to acquire what they need.

# COVID-19: SHARING RAMADAN IN SOCIETY

Use this opportunity to share your faith and your fast with your neighbours, friends and colleagues, be they Muslim or otherwise. While this Ramadan it is unlikely we will be able to open our mosques, centres and homes to the community, we can find other creative ways to share our traditions and practices with the wider community and local residents. Here are some suggestions:

- Let people know about Ramadan by sharing this guide.
- Put a Ramadan banner on your front door to let neighbours know you're observing Ramadan.
- Offer to help your neighbours with any shopping they need, especially those who are elderly and at greater risk of contracting COVID-19.
- Publish Ramadan information in your neighbourhood newsletter or local newspaper.
- Encourage your children to speak to their friends about Ramadan, how they celebrate the month and what it means to them.
- Talk about what Ramadan means to you with colleagues and classmates while working or studying from home.







# ADVICE FOR MOSQUES AND PRAYER FACILITIES

- We encourage mosques to remind their congregations prior to Ramadan of the importance of continuing to adhere to social distancing measures and following UK Government policy to help stop the spread of COVID-19, as well as some guidance that we have included in this document and on our website.
- While it is not possible for mosques to serve *iftar* on their premises or as a group, the opportunity of using the capacity to provide boxed food for those who may be struggling to make ends meet or who are vulnerable within the community and in wider society, including NHS staff, is possible. You can find more information about Muslim-led community initiatives at [mcb.org.uk/community-volunteer-initiatives](https://mcb.org.uk/community-volunteer-initiatives).
- Lectures, Qur'an recitations and supplications cannot be done in person, even though these often attract large crowds. However, these can still continue by pre-recording or livestreaming using Skype, Zoom, Facebook, YouTube or Instagram. The infrastructure to make this possible is not difficult to put in place – with many mosques ahead of the curve. Whilst you cannot be a physical hub for communities to gather, you can find ways to be a virtual hub of community activism. We will be sharing examples of this on the MCB social media channels throughout the course of the month.
- It's important to keep congregants informed of the plans the mosque has for Ramadan and to continue to offer support. The MCB has produced a template letter for mosques to send their members, available at [mcb.org.uk/ramadan](https://mcb.org.uk/ramadan).



# ADVICE FOR EMPLOYERS

*What to be aware of:*

- Some employees will be abstaining from food, liquids and smoking from dawn to sunset, which can be for up to 17 hours this year.
- Many Muslims will be fasting during daylight hours, eating one meal just before dawn (*suhoor*) and one meal at sunset (*iftar*). Muslims can eat or drink as they please through the night as needed.
- Depending on the weather and the length of the fast, some people who fast during Ramadan will experience mild dehydration, which can cause headaches, tiredness and a lack of concentration.
- 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.
- Don't assume that all employees want to be treated differently because they are fasting, but be open to having a discussion with your employees.



# ADVICE FOR LINE MANAGERS

- Be aware and open to discussing Ramadan and what support or adjustments your employee would like. Managers may experience requests for annual leave for those observing - be prepared for people to request to take holiday towards the end of Ramadan to celebrate *Eid* (holiday marking the end of Ramadan).
- Be accommodating over annual leave requests particularly as the majority of Christian holidays are national holidays. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced a useful decision-making tool to help employers deal with requests for time off for religious reasons.
- Allow for flexible working and adjusting working hours (i.e. an early start, working through lunch and an early finish) during this period if requested.
- Bear in mind that staff will be required to work from home during some or all of Ramadan as the COVID-19 situation develops, so try and apply flexibility to current working from home practices.
- Allow workers to have regular breaks for afternoon prayers as needed (*Dhuhr* and *Asr*) if requested - this is especially important for Muslims observing Ramadan to be able to pray their daily prayers on time.





## USEFUL LINKS ON HEALTH

For more information about Ramadan, visit [mcb.org.uk/ramadan](https://mcb.org.uk/ramadan), or about COVID-19, visit [mcb.org.uk/coronavirus](https://mcb.org.uk/coronavirus).

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many voluntary Muslim-led community initiatives have been set up across the UK providing support for those in need. To volunteer, access support or find out more, visit [mcb.org.uk/covid-volunteer-initiatives](https://mcb.org.uk/covid-volunteer-initiatives).

The MCB will be hosting a number of virtual *iftars*, streaming Qur'an recitation and sermons, as well as sharing key information on Ramadan and COVID-19. Follow the MCB on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to take part.

As part of the Muslim Spiritual Care Provision in the NHS, a project of the MCB, a Ramadan Health Factsheet has been produced in conjunction with BIMA to provide NHS frontline staff with key information about Ramadan, who is exempt from fasting and how best to support patients during Ramadan. This can be found at [mcb.org.uk/ramadan](https://mcb.org.uk/ramadan).

BIMA has produced a wealth of resources for Muslims and the medical community to provide expert advice and guidance on issues pertaining to Ramadan. For more information, visit [britishima.org/ramadan](https://britishima.org/ramadan). If you have any medical queries regarding Ramadan, contact [ramadan@britishima.org](mailto:ramadan@britishima.org).

## FEEDBACK

- This guidance was developed by the Muslim Council of Britain – information is accurate as of 20 April 2020.
- Feedback welcome, please email: [admin@mcb.org.uk](mailto:admin@mcb.org.uk)
- Keep up to date with the work of the MCB by joining the mailing list, visit: [mcb.org.uk/get-involved](https://mcb.org.uk/get-involved).

# RAMADAN AT HOME | STAY HOME, SAVE LIVES

FOUNDED IN 1997, THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN IS THE UK'S LARGEST AND MOST DIVERSE MUSLIM UMBRELLA BODY WITH OVER 500 MEMBERS INCLUDING MOSQUES, CHARITIES, AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS.

OUR MISSION IS:

EMPOWERING MUSLIM COMMUNITIES TOWARDS ACHIEVING A JUST, COHESIVE AND SUCCESSFUL BRITISH SOCIETY.

WE ARE INDEPENDENT, DEMOCRATIC AND CROSS-SECTARIAN, WITH CORE FUNDING FROM MEMBERSHIP FEES AND DONATIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY.

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