

Ramadan and Diabetes Management



Fasting for long periods when you have high blood sugar can put your health at risk.

The Qu'ran calls for Muslims to fast from sunrise to sunset during Ramadan. People with health problems such as diabetes are not required to fast. Choosing to fast during Ramadan when you have high blood sugar is a personal choice.

Risks of fasting

Your risks will depend on the following:

- How well you are managing your blood sugar.
- If you are on meds that can cause low blood sugars, such as insulin and sulfonylureas (ie, glipizide, glyburide).
- If you have high blood sugar-linked problems such as kidney issues.
- If you are living with diabetes complications such as poor eyesight, nerve damage, and heart or kidney disease.
- If you are pregnant.

If you choose to fast, plan and practice fasting before Ramadan

- Meet with your doctor a few months before and discuss a plan to fast safely. If you are on insulin and sulfonylureas discuss if the dose needs to be adjusted.
- Have a care plan to treat low blood sugars. Carry glucose tablets with you.
- Get and wear a medical ID bracelet or carry information about your high blood sugar meds.
- Practice fasting for a few days, as you would during Ramadan, to see if you can fast without problems.
 - Check your blood sugar levels often and keep a record.
 - Review the record with your health expert.
 - You may need extra test strips.
 - **Testing blood sugar does not break the fast.**
- Learn how to manage your high blood sugar. Become more aware of what makes your blood sugar rise and fall. Learn what you can do to control those reasons.
- Set up a meeting with a Dietitian and discuss a healthy eating plan that is best for you.
- Think about getting rid of drinks with caffeine and sugar to reduce dehydration. This process might take some time, depending on how much you drink now.
- Use Ramadan to adopt healthier habits and let go of unhealthy ones.

Tips for fasting during Ramadan

Since there is a major change in lifestyle and food patterns, several areas require special attention. Health problems may show up from over-eating at the sunset meal and a lack of sleep. Do light to moderate activity and avoid strenuous exercise.



Check your blood sugar often

- At pre-dawn meal (suhoor)
- Morning
- Mid-day
- Pre-sunset meal (iftar)
- 2 hours after iftar
- Any time there are warnings of low or high blood sugar or feeling unwell

Pre-dawn meal (Suhoor)

- Eat a meal with high fiber to stay full longer. Include fruits and veggies and lots of fluids to stay hydrated. These types of foods are digested slowly. This will make it easier to balance your blood sugar throughout the day while fasting.
- Drink sugar-free and caffeine-free liquids to hydrate before sunrise.
- Avoid salty foods to reduce dehydration.

Meal after sunset (Iftar)

- Limit fried foods and sugary sweets. Be mindful and watch portion sizes to avoid raising your blood sugars too high (≥ 300 mg/dl).
- Increase fluid intake during non-fasting hours. Limit sugary drinks, including fruit juice, which can be high in sugar.

Prayers (Tarawih)

- Since this can be tiring, make it part of your daily exercise. Be sure to hydrate with water.

When to break the fast

- **If your blood sugar is too low (<60 mg/dl).** Blood sugar could drop even lower if treatment is delayed.
- **If your blood sugar reaches <70 mg/dl in the first few hours** after the start of the fast. This is especially true if you take insulin, sulfonylurea drugs, or meglitinide at pre-dawn.
- If your blood sugar exceeds 300 mg/dl, speak with your doctor. You may need meds.
- Avoid fasting on sick days. Discuss a sick day plan with your doctor.

Do you have questions?

Call our 24-hour Nurse Advice Line. We are here to help you.



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