



National Ambulance
BME Forum

Ramadan Guidance

Supporting staff and providing
care to our communities during
Ramadan

Working to improve the
experience of Black and Minority
Ethnic Staff and communities

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Welcome!

Following our re-launch in 2018 and our first conference, we've been looking at the ways in which we can support colleagues and patients.

One of the things we want to be able to do is to develop good practice guidelines, so welcome to our first resource document!

Although the network's focus is on Black and Minority Ethnic staff and communities, faith often plays an important part in the lives of many of our diverse communities.

Festivals like Ramadan, as well as Easter, Yom Kippur, Vaisakhi, Diwali and the other religious events give us an opportunity not just to support those who observe them, but also to learn and understand more about the people we work with and the communities we serve.



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Forum



Ramadan - the basics!

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar year. It is a month of fasting, a duty upon all adults and healthy Muslims. In the UK, Ramadan will start on **Sunday 5th May 2019**.

What is a fast?

The fast lasts between dawn and sunset. It is a total fast with complete abstinence from all food and drink.

How long does Ramadan last?

It lasts 29 or 30 days. The end of Ramadan is marked by the festival of Eid-UI-Fitr for which some Muslim staff members will wish to take leave from work.



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Is everyone required to fast?

Some people are exempt from fasting, these include:

- pregnant and menstruating women
- lactating women who have concerns about their own or their child's health
- children
- the elderly and infirm
- those who are ill
- individuals travelling long distances.

However, in many cases, exempted persons and other people who may be vulnerable, such as diabetics and the elderly, will want to fast. It is a very special time where Muslims will want to be a part of this time of reflection and consideration.

What do observers do?

Many people practice these traditions during the month-long celebration of Ramadan:



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Refrain from eating or drinking (even water) daily from sunrise to sunset, (approximately 15.5 hours a day). Many Muslims will consider it an obligatory duty to fast from dawn to dusk. Through not eating, people are encouraged to think of the less fortunate who are often without food.

Wake up early for "Suhoor" to eat a power meal before fasting begins at sunrise (around 3.00am).

Celebrate "Iftar", the breaking of the fast at sundown (sometimes gathering with family, friends and neighbours for large feasts).

Give money, food and time **to charity** and people in need.

Reflect, pray, visit mosques and read verses of the Quran.

Meeting peoples' needs

Being equipped with the necessary information in relation to Ramadan supports clinicians to provide the best possible care that considers a persons specific needs, as well as allowing patients to make informed choices.

If you need to understand the specific needs of a patient in relation to Ramadan, ask them. If there is a communication barrier please use telephone interpreting services and any other available communication tools to aid communication.

Knowing this information will allow clinicians to considering the patients needs when providing medical interventions, care and advice.



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When approaching the issue with Muslim patients, it is important for healthcare professionals to provide an acknowledgement to the fast e.g.

“I understand that it is Ramadan, are you fasting at the moment?”

“I would like to be able to... I believe this may/may not break your fast (where applicable)... are you comfortable with this?”

Where Muslim patients refuse treatment, even though it may not break the fast, the patient's choice should be respected and advice should be offered on medical grounds.



Impact of fasting on clinical assessments



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The fast will break when:

- Eating or drinking intentionally
- Taking oral medication
- Providing nourishing medication (also by intramuscular or intravenous injections)
- Smoking
- Using vaginal or rectal pessaries

Clinical interventions that would break the fast include:

*this list is not exhaustive

- Using Aspirin
- Glucagon (IM)
- Glucose drip (IV)
- Glucose drinks

The fast will not break when:

**Caution this will be open to the patient's interpretation.*

- Administering injections (intravenous, intramuscular and subcutaneous)
- Taking bloods (thumb pricks or intravenous)
- Using puffers and inhalers or eye and ear drops
- Eating or drinking unintentionally

Clinical interventions would not break the fast include:

*this list is not exhaustive

- GTN (Glyceryl Tri Nitrate)
- Treating wounds
- Rectal Diazepam
- Nebulisers and Oxygen
- Ventolin sprays / Salbutamol
- Saline infusion (IV)
- Morphine (IV)
- Diazepam
- Adrenaline
- Penicillin (IV)

Working and Ramadan

Working has a great importance and value in Islam. The importance of earning a living through lawful means is emphasised in the Qur'an.

Should I tell my colleagues that I am fasting?

It is better to let your colleagues and managers know that you are fasting. They may be wondering why you aren't eating and not your usual self.

By discussing it with your manager, you may find that they are willing to consider a flexible working arrangement such as an early start, early finish, a shorter lunch or something else which will help you during the month of Ramadan.



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How do I manage fasting at work?

- **Plan your leave wisely:** Whether it's to book time off during Ramadan or for Eid-ul-fitr, planning your leave early is important.
- **Eating well:** Eating healthily and drinking lots of water [between sunset and sunrise] will help boost your energy.
- **Meal breaks:** If you are scheduled a meal break and you are fasting, consider alternatives to eating - try and find a quiet space for a power nap, or consider going for a walk.



Considerations for managers

Managers need to be aware of the importance of 'being part of' Ramadan. This could lead to placing a different demand on Trust services in areas where there are high density ethnic minority Muslim populations.

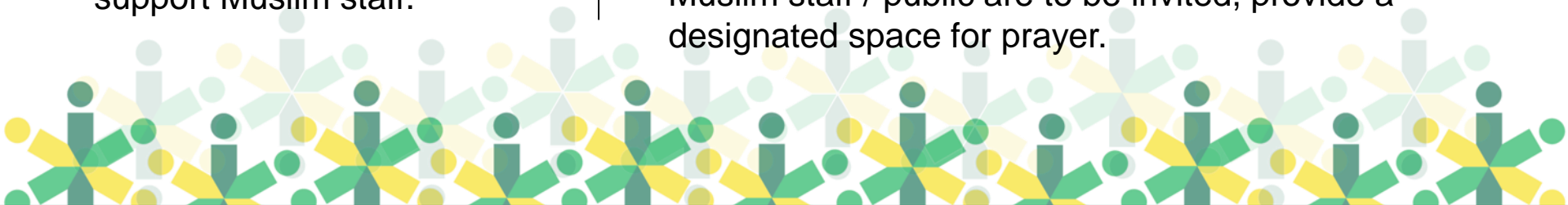
Managers also need to consider the impact of Ramadan on staffing and exploring ways to accommodate Muslim staff needs. Consideration should be given to allowing breaks at different times of day to support Muslim staff.

Other considerations Managers should take into account:

- Consider sensitively any requests for annual leave or shift swaps for Eid-ul-Fitr
- People may be more tired and lack energy due to the lack of food and water, and broken sleep patterns. Consider flexible working or changing shift rotas to accommodate tiredness.
- Support people to break the fast where possible at the required time.
- Allowing time off to pray, especially at sunset.
- Allowing meal breaks at different times, if possible - for example lunch break at dusk, initially to coincide with breaking the fast.
- Consider the impact of any events during this time if Muslim staff / public are to be invited, provide a designated space for prayer.



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Balancing religious identity and operational demand



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All requests based on religious identity and practice should be considered and balanced against operational need.

As a supportive employer and proactive service provider, it is good practice to accommodate these requests wherever possible. Accommodating religious beliefs and practices does not mean allowing extra time off – it is about being flexible about employees' existing holiday entitlement, working patterns or break periods.

