

Ramadan 2023

A guide to
supporting patients and staff



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1. What happens during Ramadan

- 1.1. Ramadan is the most sacred month of the year for Muslims. It is a month of heightened devotion, reflection, charity, and compassion.
- 1.2. Ramadan 2023 is expected to begin on Tuesday 21st March and end on Friday 21st April, subject to the sighting of the moon. The celebratory day of Eid al-Fitr will begin on Saturday 22nd April. Please note, dates may vary by a day or two.
- 1.3. Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection, personal review, and prayer. It involves a daily period of fasting starting at dawn and finishing at sunset over the month, about 15 to 18 hours a day this year.
- 1.4. Fasting starts with people waking up before dawn to eat and to pray, called “Suhur/Sehri”; and finishing their food and drink just before hearing the call for the dawn prayer and thus the day of fasting begins. Muslims will continue the day with two further prayers. The fourth prayer will be at sunset when they break their fast, called “Iftar”. This is followed by the fifth and final prayer at night.

2. Fasting during COVID-19 / critically unwell

- 2.1. The Trust recognises that Ramadan is a very special time for Muslims and that patient's choice should be respected. Advice and information should be offered on medical grounds about:
 - The impact of fasting on early recovery which may result in delayed discharge.
 - The risk of not meeting nutritional and hydrational needs.
- 2.2. Patients who wish to continue their fast as an inpatient should be advised to discuss this decision with:
 - Their consultant / ward doctor.
 - The Trust's Muslim Chaplain / Imam.
- 2.3. Doctors who have queries relating to medication can direct these to:
 - ORC and Trafford – Tel: 0161 276 6270 | Email: medicines.information@mft.nhs.uk
 - Wythenshawe Hospital – Tel: 0161 291 3331 | Email: medicines.information@mft.nhs.uk

Both Medicines Information Services are offering a 5 day (Monday - Friday), 9am-5pm service.
- 2.4. If possible, hospital appointments should be given at appropriate times (i.e., outside prayer times - the Muslim patient will be aware of these times) or at the end of the fast.
- 2.5. Arrangements for breaking of fast - availability of a quiet prayer space at prayer times would be appreciated.

3. Fasting and vaccinations

- 3.1. Advice from the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) is that taking the vaccine currently licensed in the UK does not invalidate your fast as per the opinion of Islamic scholars. And that individuals should not delay their vaccinations on account of Ramadan.

4. Community Services

- 4.1. If you are supporting people in the community, you do what you have done every year and recognise Ramadan within the care plan and just accordingly. For example, if food is provided to the service user and that is usually at 5.00pm, then you would adjust the timing to align with when the service user can eat.

5. Availability of Halal food

- 5.1. Whilst there are certain groups of people and circumstances where Muslims may be exempt from fasting, the decision to fast is a personal one. If you have fasting patients in your ward, the following may be useful to consider:
- Patients nutritionally at risk should be identified in line with your local protocols.
 - Dietitians - to assist with individual patient nutrition and hydration needs.
 - Refer to other relevant policies such as Nutrition and Hydration, "Breast-Feeding policy."

Requesting meals out of normal meal timings for fasting patients and staff.

At Oxford Road Campus:

- Phone Sodexo Helpdesk 4850 with your request for a snack box.
- Halal snack boxes are available 24/7. They contain meat or vegetable sandwiches (cold), fruit juice, yogurt and cheese and crackers.
- Staff to collect food from the Eye Café.

At Wythenshawe Campus:

- Phone Sodexo Helpdesk 5430 with your request for a snack box.
- Halal snack boxes are available 24/7. They contain meat or vegetable sandwiches (cold), packet of crisps, yogurt/fruit or cheese and crackers.
- Snack boxes will be delivered to the ward by night porter.

At North Manchester General:

- Phone Catering Kitchen on 42188 with your request for a snack box.
- Halal snack boxes are available 7am – 7pm. They contain meat or vegetable sandwiches (cold), fruit juice, yogurt and cheese and crackers.
- Staff to collect microwaveable Halal meals from H4 24/7.

6. Prayer facilities

- 6.1. The multi-faith rooms are currently being left open. Please consult our Muslim Chaplains for further details:

Multi Faith Centre contact details

MRI - Tel: 0161 276 4874 | email: chaplain@mft.nhs.uk

Wythenshawe – Tel: 0161 291 2297

North Manchester – Tel: 0161 720 2990

7. Supporting Staff during Ramadan

Managing staff holidays and working patterns during Ramadan

This year Ramadan falls in the month of March-April, meaning that this year's Ramadan will have the long average fasting hours (14 to 17 hours each day). During Ramadan Muslims are prohibited from consuming food and drink between the hours of sunrise and sunset for around 30 days.

Due to waking up early to eat before sunrise and prayers staff may be a little more tired than usual. The Trust has a duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010 by providing a flexible working environment in which no one is put at a disadvantage because of their religion or belief.

Encourage flexible working

Approach requests for breaks sensitively – fasting employees may prefer to start earlier, miss, or reduce lunch breaks. This could involve working through their lunch break to facilitate an early finish, arrange for meetings, training, and other important tasks to be held in the mornings when employees' energy levels are likely to be higher. Please be aware that staff should still take their breaks according to health and safety guidance

Communicate to staff to inform them of Ramadan – this is a good opportunity to inform all employees of what fasting entails and the effect on colleagues taking part.

Managing staff annual leave during Eid Festival.

Eid festival marks the end of Ramadan and is celebrated for up to three days by Muslims and will begin, depending on the sighting of the moon, on or just after 20th of April in the UK.

Staff may want to book leave to celebrate Eid but would not know much in advance of the actual Eid date due to the sighting of the new moon.

Managers should consider sensitively any request for annual leave or shift swaps for Eid-ul-Fitr on 20th, 21st or 22nd of April, depending on sighting of the new moon.

It is good practice to accommodate annual leave requests wherever possible. However, all requests based on religious identity and practice, should be considered, and balanced against operational needs.

Eid can be an opportunity to drive staff engagement and improve understanding of the Muslim festival across the workforce. Teams may want to consider approaching it in much the same way as Christmas/Easter or other religious events. Perhaps indulge in some themed food and treats or hold an Eid party or lunch.

Accommodating religious belief and practices, does not mean allowing extra time off – it is about being flexible about employees' existing holiday entitlement, working patterns or break periods.

8. NHS Muslim Staff Network Ramadhan and Eid Guidance



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