



THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN'S GUIDE TO

# RAMADAN 2022

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The Muslim Council of Britain

# CONTENTS

- 1 What Is Ramadan?
- 2 What's the Reason for Fasting?
- 3 Is Fasting Harmful for Your Health?
- 4 Impact of COVID-19
- 5 Adapting For Ramadan
- 6 Maintaining Physical Health
- 7 Fasting & Vaccinations
- 8 Maintaining Mental Health
- 9 Working From Home
- 10 Studying From Home
- 11 Iftars at Home
- 12 Virtual Iftars
- 13 Ramadan & the Cost-of-Living Crisis
- 14 Charity, Donating and Volunteering
- 15 Sharing Ramadan in Society
- 16 Advice for Mosques and Prayer Facilities
- 17 Eco-Conscious Ramadan
- 18 Advice for Employers
- 19 Advice for Line Managers
- 20 Useful Resources

Ramadan 2022 is estimated begin on the 2nd or 3rd of April and culminate with the first day of Eid falling on the 3rd or 4th of May. Exact dates are subject to sightings of the moon.

This booklet contains guidelines, advice and signposts to resources designed to help Muslims in Britain make the most of the blessed month. It is also a handy reference point for communities, workplaces, educators 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 is to work towards an 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.

For additional information, see the section on 'Maintaining Physical Health' (pg.6) in Ramadan.





## IMPACT OF COVID-19

Ramadan 2020 & 2021 were a very different experience for Muslims, as communities adapted to changing circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with public health guidelines.

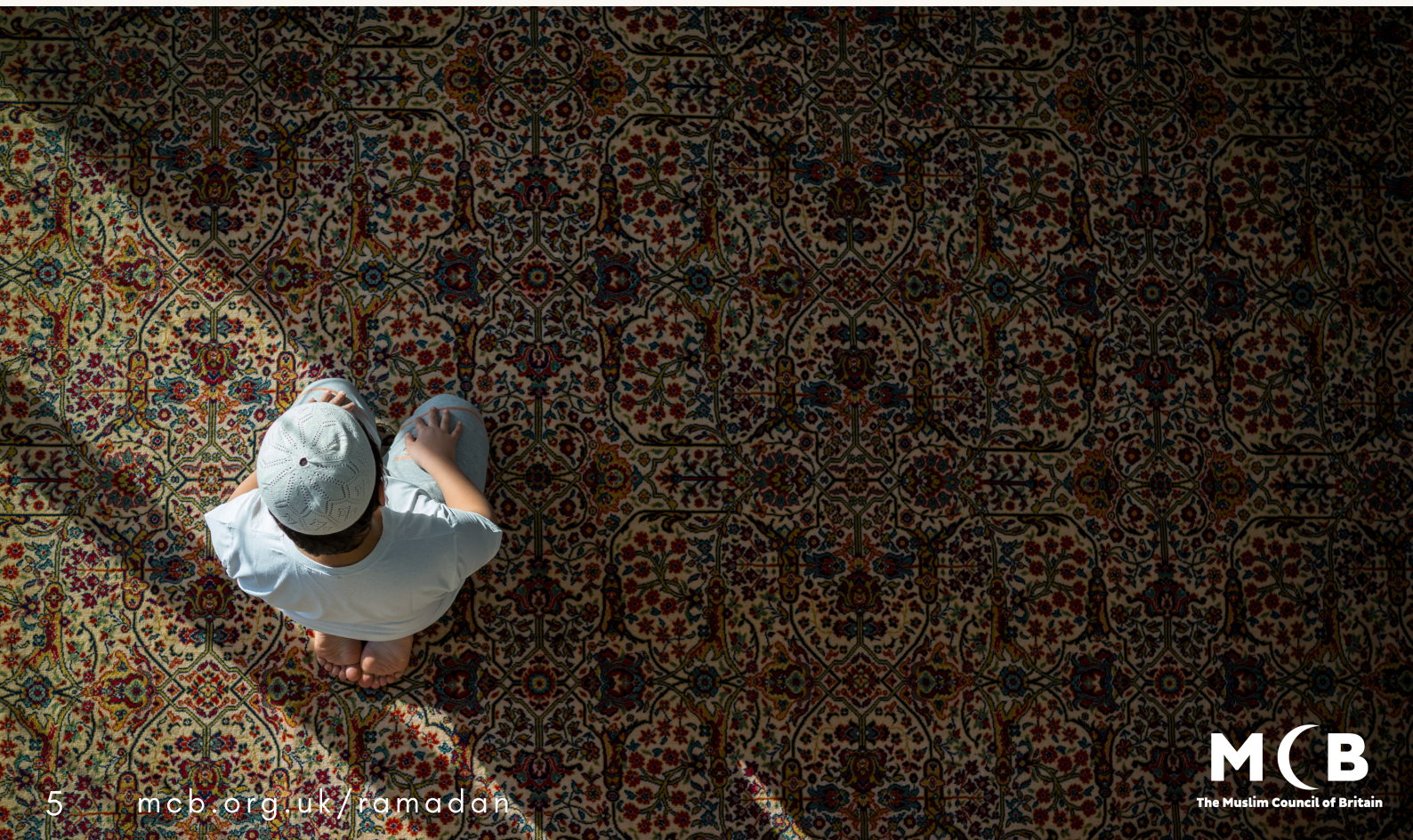
This Ramadan, with government restrictions all but removed, we will be able to return to our pre-pandemic Ramadan routines. It is important, however, to understand that COVID-19 infection rates remain high in the UK, new variants are routinely discovered and the lack of restrictions and testing provision will impact our ability to control transmission. Given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority communities, the elderly and clinically vulnerable, we should continue to exercise basic safety measures and remain cautious whilst partaking of communal activities and enjoying the spiritual uplift and community spirit that Ramadan is synonymous with.

All of MCB's COVID-19 resources, including previous safety guidances, are available at: **[www.mcb.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.mcb.org.uk/coronavirus)**

# ADAPTING FOR RAMADAN

If you are unable to partake of communal activities as a family, or simply dealing with time constraints & pressures, for example, consider the following:

- 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.





## MAINTAINING PHYSICAL HEALTH

Individuals with an illness or health condition where fasting could be detrimental to their health are exempt from fasting. The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) have created a peer reviewed document that brings together a range of literature reviews around how medical professionals can advise patients whether to keep or terminate their fast. Please note, clinicians must exercise discretion based on each individual patient's circumstances.

A wealth of resources for Muslims and the medical community on issues pertaining to health during Ramadan, are available at: **[britishima.org/ramadan](https://britishima.org/ramadan)**.

Also available for medical healthcare professionals and patients is the MCB's Ramadan Health Factsheet 2022. To download, visit: **[mcb.org.uk/ramadan](https://mcb.org.uk/ramadan)**

# FASTING & VACCINATION

Although COVID-19 vaccination rollout, for doses 1 and 2 and the subsequent booster, has now tapered, British Muslims from the following demographics are still eligible for COVID-19 vaccination:

- Aged 12 or over, doses 1 and 2 of vaccine
- Aged 16 and over, and some children aged 12-15, booster dose
- People aged 12 and over who had a severely weakened immune system when they had their first 2 doses, will be offered a 3rd dose and a booster

For more information on vaccine eligibility and availability, visit the NHS COVID-19 vaccination website.

The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) have consulted a wide range of Islamic scholars and the opinion of the vast majority is that receiving a vaccine does not invalidate your fast. So, if the need arises, you should be able to get vaccinated during daylight hours. Please consult your local Imam or scholar for further details, or visit: [www.mcb.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.mcb.org.uk/coronavirus)





# MAINTAINING MENTAL HEALTH

Muslim mental health organisations have documented an exponential rise in demand for their services since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has transpired despite the general lack of conversation around mental health in British Muslim communities.

The restrictions that have kept us apart during Ramadan 2020/21 have now been removed, and we are set to be able to partake of communal activities such as physical *iftars* and *taraweeh* prayers in our Mosques. This may well help alleviate feelings of isolation and disconnect. That said, the toll the pandemic has taken on mental health remains, and (re-)socialising in Ramadan for those impacted by mental health illnesses can prove especially difficult.

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, several Muslim mental health organisations in the UK have come together to collaborate and provide a range of initiatives for British Muslim communities nationwide.

For more information & support, visit: [mcb.org.uk/resources/mental-health](https://mcb.org.uk/resources/mental-health)

# WORKING FROM HOME

Working from home, and hybrid flexible working arrangements are the new norm. While this may have several 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 or breaks at a different time to accommodate prayers, breaking their fast, 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.





## STUDYING FROM HOME

Much like working from home, studying from home with limited in-person interaction with teachers/lecturers and classmates, has its own challenges. Fasting may tire you out further, and dehydration is often a factor in reduced focus and concentration. Much like with working from home, consider:

- Giving your school, 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 to 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.



## IFTARS AT HOME

We all eagerly await the opportunity to invite family and friends for *iftar* this year and share in the blessings of Ramadan together. It is vital, however, that we continue to be cautious and take small steps to reduce the possibility of COVID-19 transmission, including: observing hand hygiene, increasing ventilation within the home, using masks when on public transport or at the shops, for example, and testing regularly if you're routinely in contact with larger groups of people, or working on the front line. This is especially important if living as part of a multi-generational household including elderly members of the family and/or those with pre-existing health conditions, who remain particularly vulnerable.

# VIRTUAL IFTARS

Although we are able to host in-person *iftars* this Ramadan, another way to connect with friends and loved ones, from far and wide, is to host a 'virtual *iftar*', or join a community-based event such as this online. Individuals or families can join together via video conferencing facilities like Zoom, FaceTime or video-calling apps like Skype or WhatsApp. This is an important way for individuals to stay connected, especially for those who are living alone or away from family, or those who continue to be unable to meet in large groups due to health concerns.

Many campaigns have hosted virtual iftars, and produced resources to facilitate such online events. The Ramadan Tent Project's 'Open Iftar' is one such initiative. For more information, visit: [www.ramadantentproject.com](http://www.ramadantentproject.com)





## RAMADAN & THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Although 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 coming out of the pandemic, the strain on supply chains and the rise in living costs, be it food, fuel or energy.

Please ensure that we only purchase in reasonable quantities, which will allow everyone to acquire what they need. Also, per the spirit of Ramadan and the teachings of our beloved faith, do not hesitate to provide support to those within our communities struggling to observe the holy month, or indeed our neighbours within the wider community who may also be struggling.

For, Muslims in the UK in need of support, zakat given through the National Zakat Foundation may be able to help. For more information, visit: [www.nzf.org.uk](http://www.nzf.org.uk)

# CHARITY, DONATING & VOLUNTEERING

**Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives another except that Allah increases his honour, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.” (Muslim)**

Ramadan is also a month of giving, be that financially to charity or physically in service to others. Whether it's to local causes such as a food bank run by your local mosque or community centre, or supporting causes alleviating poverty abroad, giving charity does not diminish our wealth, it multiplies it.

**Donating Safely** - it is important to ensure your chosen charity is reputable and genuine. In addition, as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, online donation is all the more common. It is important to be vigilant of insecure websites, scams or spam emails seeking donations. For those interested in donating online, see Muslim Charities Forum's *'How to Give Smart and Give Safe this Ramadan'* guide. If you are involved in running a charity, please see the guide to *'Ethical Considerations for Muslim Charities.'* To download both these resources, visit: [www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk/covid-19-resources](http://www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk/covid-19-resources)

**Volunteering Safely** - Although COVID-19 restrictions have been removed this year, infection rates remain high across the UK, so it is important that we remain conscious of this whilst being of service to our communities during Ramadan. There are so many ways to help the most vulnerable around us; for top tips on staying safe whilst doing so, see the Muslim Charities Forum's *'Practical Guide on how to Keep Safe when Volunteering During the COVID-19 Crisis'*.



# 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. This Ramadan, we may well open our mosques, centres and homes to the community with some precautions. We can also continue to find 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 or infirm
- 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 & PRAYER FACILITIES

- COVID-19 infection rates remain very high across the UK; we encourage Mosques to remind their congregations of the importance of being cautious when attending Iftar or *taraweeh* prayers
- While Mosques may well return to serving *iftar* on their premises or as a group, they should consider continuing on the exceptional work done in providing 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, as throughout the pandemic. Contact local food banks, charities and your local authority to identify where help may be required.
- Many centres will already have a digital infrastructure in place, so lectures, Qur'an recitations and supplications should continue to be made available/livestreamed using Skype, Zoom, Facebook, YouTube or Instagram, for those unable to attend Mosque. Whilst Mosques and Islamic centres are physical hubs for communities to gather, we should also strive to be virtual hubs of community learning and activism.
- Many Mosques may still be implementing basic COVID-19 safety protocol; for Mosques interested in (re-)introducing such measures, MCB's COVID-19 resources, including previous safety guidance, are available at: [www.mcb.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.mcb.org.uk/coronavirus)



# ADVICE FOR EMPLOYERS

- Some employees will be abstaining from food, liquids and smoking from dawn to sunset, throughout the month of Ramadan, from 3rd April to 4th May (exact dates subject to sighting of the moon).
- Muslims observing Ramadan 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.
- Fasts will get longer as the month progresses and days get longer; lasting up to 16hrs as we approach the month May.
- Depending on the weather and the length of the fast, some people who fast during Ramadan may 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.
- 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.
- If not already available in your workplace, we encourage a prayer space be allocated for those working on-site and wishing to do their daily prayers.



# USEFUL RESOURCES

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).

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).

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.

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 25th March 2022.
- 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)

# THE MCB'S GUIDE TO RAMADAN 2022

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.

We are an independent, democratic and cross-sectarian organisation, with core funding from membership fees and donations from Muslim communities.

Our Mission: Empowering Muslim communities towards achieving a just, cohesive and successful British society.

Help expand our work by becoming a friend of MCB at:  
[www.mcb.org.uk/friends](http://www.mcb.org.uk/friends)

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