

Ramadan 2020

We are here to support you

Like previous years, Barts Health NHS Trust recognises that many of our staff, patients and local residents will observe the Muslim Holy month of Ramadan. This year Ramadan is due to start from 24 April or 25 April depending on the sighting of the new moon.

Ramadan (Fasting) will involve fasting over 17 hours from dawn to dusk starting on 24 April and will finish by 24 May with *Eid ul Fitr* celebration. This means abstaining from food, drink (including water) and smoking. While fasting is an important part of Ramadan, it is also a time of self-reflection and self-evaluation for Muslims.

Ramadan - Frequently Asked Questions

Should I fast?

The Holy month of Ramadan is also a time to be mindful of own health and wellbeing. This year particularly, due to the COVID-19, many of our patients and their families will be more anxious about religious obligations as well as their own health. As a Muslim, it is also important to be aware that Health is a gift from God and looking after ones health is also obligatory.

Barts Health clinicians and religious leaders are this year stepping up their efforts to highlight the possible risks to health that one can face during the holy month of Ramadan.

Those in poor health, the elderly and mothers who are breastfeeding are exempt from the obligation, but some may still insist on fasting.

The clear, joint message being sent by health professionals and local Imams is that if an individual has an ongoing or underlying medical condition, it is acceptable and very important to continue treatment and to attend hospital appointments where possible or seek advice from their GP during the fasting period.

Imam Faruq Siddiqi, Barts Health's Muslim Chaplain, said: "The general Islamic ruling is, if a person's health is at risk due to a medical condition, they should not fast or they can break the fast."

Professor Tahseen Chowdhury, Consultant Diabetologist at Barts Health NHS Trust, said: "Many people in the area hope to fast during the month of Ramadan. It is important, however, that if you have significant health problems such as diabetes, heart disease or kidney problems, you consult with your GP, nurse or consultant and seek advice on whether or not it is safe to fast. Many health conditions can be seriously affected by fasting."

Patients, who suffer from any chronic illness or health complication, should consult their GP prior to fasting to see if they can do so safely during Ramadan. If fasting is not recommended by the GP, they should speak to their local Imam.

Who is exempt from Fasting?

1. All those who are unable to fast due to illness (physical or mental) or being very frail.



2. Pregnant and menstruating women.
3. Lactating women who have concerns about their own, or their child's health.

It is really important that if you have a medical condition, you see your GP before Ramadan to discuss treatment options that do not interfere with your fast. You can also talk to your Imam.

What should I do if I feel unwell or dehydrated?

If a person's health is at risk due to the fast i.e. dehydration, pregnant or injury, they can break their fast as their health is more important, Allah has given permission in the Quran to break the fast. Islam does not require you to harm yourself in fulfilling the fast. If a fast is broken, it will need to be compensated by fasting at a later date when health is better.

What should I do if I have an appointment in Ramadan?

Due to COVID-19, your appointments may be rearranged. It is important that you talk to your local hospital or GP to re-schedule your appointment as soon as possible.

What should I do if I have diabetes?

If you take medication such as tablets or insulin to control your diabetes, please speak to your GP before Ramadan starts to find out if it is safe to fast. Not taking diabetic medication is dangerous and can cause short and long-term health complications. Please contact our diabetes team using the numbers provided below for a pre-Ramadan check and for further information. You may not need to fast if you are not medically fit, please speak to your GP and your local Imam or our Muslim chaplaincy service at any of the Barts Health hospital sites.

What should I do if I am having tests or treatment for cancer?

Please remember that screening saves thousands of lives every year by diagnosing cancer early before there are any symptoms. If you are having any procedural tests or treatment for Cancer then you will be asked not to fast. If it is a scan without swallowing any medication then your fast will not be broken, you can continue with your fast.

What Should I do if I have cancer?

It is highly recommended that all chemotherapy or radiotherapy appointments are kept as scheduled. It is important that you realise that following strict medication guidance during the month of Ramadan is NOT against your religious beliefs. It can be extremely dangerous to alter times of your treatment or medication or to take drugs that require food on an empty stomach.

Should you wish to have more clarifications, please contact your Cancer Treatment Team or for religious beliefs you can ask your local Imam.

Useful contacts:

Do you know that Ramadan is a good time to give up smoking? For support and more information please contact our dedicated teams in your area.

Stop smoking services:

Mile End, St Bartholomew's, and The Royal London Hospital

Freephone: 0800 169 1943 Tel: 020 7882 8230

clinicbookings@qmul.ac.uk

Newham University Hospital; Tel: 020 3373 6630

stopsmokingteam@newham.gov.uk

Whipps Cross University Hospital

Freephone: 03001231044

stopsmokingservice@nelft.nhs.uk

Or visit: www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/your-health/smoking/

For religious advice please visit your local Imam or The Hospital Muslim Chaplaincy service in your area.

Muslim Chaplaincy Service:

The Royal London Hospital Muslim Chaplain: 020 3594 2070

St Bartholomew's Hospital Muslim Chaplain: 020 3465 7220

Newham University Hospital and Whipps Cross University Hospital Muslim Chaplain: 020 7363 8053

For advice or information on diabetes and a pre-Ramadan check-up please call your local diabetes services:

Barts Health Diabetes Services:

Mile End Hospital: 020 8223 8836

Newham University Hospital: 020 8586 5200

Whipps Cross University Hospital: 020 8535 6707

For further information and support please visit:

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/ramadan>

For more information please visit our website www.bartshealth.nhs.uk