



Healthy Ramadan GUIDE

Recipes, Nutrition and Lifestyle guide

Dr shazia Faisal

MBBS, MSC Clinical Nutrition





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Oh, you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may learn piety and righteousness”
(Quran,2:183)



Ramadan: A month of mindfulness

Ramadan, one of the five pillars of Islam, is fast approaching and Muslims all over the world mark the month of Ramadan by fasting from sunrise to sunset for 29/30 days. In Islam, fasting is primarily an institution for spiritual discipline and self-control.



Fasting in the month of Ramadan is an opportunity to make significant changes in your lifestyles. This month requires you to give the stomach a break, and by doing so, you can break down and expel the accumulated toxins from your body. Fasting is also seen and proven as being healthy for the human body, helps reduce insulin resistance, lowering your risk of type 2 Diabetes and decreasing heart diseases. Moreover, Ramadan is an ideal time to break bad habits, to reflect on personality and to improve your character.

Many people view Ramadan as a month of feast and spend most of their time preparing the best meals. During the first few days of Ramadan, some people prepare lavish meals without thinking about, how it will affect them later on, especially when they need to stand up for long Taraweeh prayers. Overeating has long been frowned upon in Islam as it is thought to increase worldly appetites and cause sluggishness, thereby 'dulling' the soul, hampering spiritual growth and increasing physical ailments.

To fully benefit from the fast, we must spare a great deal of thought to the type and quantity of food that we indulge in through this blessed month.

The aim of this guide is to educate people about healthy choices during this blessed month and how they maximize the benefit of fasting.



Why Fasting is good for You

Your body enters a fasting state eight hours after your last meal, when your gut completele absorption of all nutrients. For energy the first thing your body will use up is glucose stored in your liver and muscles

When the glucose runs out, your body start using fat for energy. small quantities of glucose are also manufactured through other mechanism in the liver. During the fasting month, the detoxification process also occur as toxin stored in your body fats are also dissolved and removed.

The use of stored fat as energy helps in weight loss and reduce your cholesterol levels and insulin sensitivity. After few days of fasting higher levels of endorphins appears in the blood results in better mental wellbeing

Only during prolonged fast of many days/ weeks your body eventually turn to using protein released from the breakdown of muscles - called starvation . This does not happen in ramadan if you are eating properly when you break your fast.

Healthy eating starts in the grocery store

Healthy eating starts with choosing the right ingredients. It is easier to make a nutritious meal if your kitchen is already stocked with amazing seasonal produce, proteins and healthy whole grains

Avoid shopping when you are hungry as you generally end up buying junk and unhealthy stuff.

Make a list as this is very important step to stay focused and buy only what you came for if you have a list.

Meal prep is key; plan your iftar and suhoor in advance to make your days more efficient.





Ramadan

GROCERY LIST ESSENTIALS

Dairy and Meat

Chicken
Fish
Egg
Milk
Feta cheese
Low Fat yoghurt

Vegetables

Mushrooms
Spinach
Kale
Potatoes
Sweet potato
Courgettes
Cucumber
Onions

Fruits

Banana
Strawberries
Rasberries
Oranges Apples
Grapes
Pomegranate

Grains

wholemeal Bread
Brown Rice
Quinoa
Chickpeas flour
Wholemeal pasta
Couscous

OTHERS

Almonds
Flax seeds
Chia seeds
Pumpkin seeds
Sunflower seeds

Chickpeas
Red Kidney beans

Nutrition in Ramadan

During this holy month when the fast is around 16 to 18 hours, our body need the energy to fulfil day time activities. It is very important that we should eat balanced food rich in complex carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, fruits and vegetables.

The diet should be simple and not differ too much from one's normal everyday diet. It should contain foods from all the major food groups, as shown below



Carbohydrates and Fibre



Carbohydrates are essential for body energy, and all carbs are not bad. Try to include comlex carbohydrtaes, a slow-release energy foods that will keep you going longer, such as oats, couscous, cereals, lentils and rice.

Fibre rich foods are also digested slowly and include bran, cereals, grains, potatoes with skin and almost all fruit



Protein

Protein-rich food will help you feel satisfied and reduce loss of muscle mass. Examples include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, beans, seeds.



Healthy Fats



Dietary fats are essential for our body, but all dietary fats are not created equally. An excessive intake of saturated fats increases harmful cholesterol levels, contributing to an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Be mindful and try to add healthy fats like avocado, seeds, nuts, nut butter and fish.

Modify your cooking techniques



it is best to adopt healthy food during Ramadan. But it is equally important to practice healthy cooking methods such as grilling, roasting and baking. This would cut down the amount of oil in your meal and would also enrich the flavours of your food in other way. .

How to keep yourself hydrated in this holy month.



With long fasting hours during Ramadan, it is very important to keep our selves well hydrated. Our body is unable to store water and so the kidney conserve as much water as possible by reducing the amount lost in urine. However, the body continues to lose water and salt through breathing, sweating, and urine.

Drinking not enough water may cause headache, tiredness and some people complain of constipation due to sluggish bowel movement.

- Drink water regularly between iftaar and suhoor, instead of chugging down entire bottle before dawn.
- Salty food makes you more thirsty, therefore it is advisable to reduce or completely avoid these food during suhoor time
- Try to add fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet, especially cucumber, watermelon, strawberries as they are rich in water as well as fiber
- Soups, smoothies, yoghurt, fresh fruit juices are best alternative for fluid consumption
- Decrease your caffeine and tea intake and try to replace them with green tea



How to drink 8 glasses a day during Ramadan



Once you wake up for suhoor



After suhoor



After Magrib Azan



After Magrib prayer



After iftar



After isha prayer



After Tarawee



Before you sleep



Food to avoid

Avoid fried and processed foods as they are high in salt and sugar with empty calories. These foods can slow down your metabolism, which may contribute to weight gain. Moreover, eating greasy food with an empty stomach can trigger acid reflux and heartburn.



Avoid fizzy and sugary drinks. Do not open your fast with fizzy drinks or sugary juices, as these can spike your blood sugar immediately and dehydrate you very quickly.

Suhoor: The Blessed Meal



For suhoor, it is recommended to have high fibre, slow-digesting food like complex carbohydrates, protein and healthy fats. Do not forget to take 2 glass of water.

- If you are not a morning person, then smoothies, overnight oats and chia pudding are the best options.
- Mixed vegetable omelette (spinach, onions mushrooms, tomatoes)
- Wholemeal Toast with different toppings like (avocado and scrambled egg) or with peanut butter and banana. You can add nuts for extra fibre.



- Replenish your energy levels by eating a healthy and balanced iftar. While iftar meals are often a time for celebration, with families and friends coming together to break their fasts, it is important not to go overboard when eating during Ramadan.
 - Open your fast with dates followed by water or milk is a great way to getting your body ready for food and filling up, so you do not overindulge on the carb-heavy treats.
- Adding vegetables to meat dishes, having a salad
- with the meal watching the fat and salt in preparing traditional food can all help.
- Soups are an important part of iftar in many households, but try to make them at home as
- store-bought soup are high in sodium. Go for homemade stocks.



Healthy Meals ideas for Ramadan



Homemade Granola

Make this healthy granola without any added sugar before Ramadan, and enjoy it as a quick suhoor meal or crunchy snack with some fruit toppings.



Ingredients

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup dried fruits (cranberries, apricot)
- 1 cup chopped nuts (I used walnuts, almonds)
- 1/3 cup honey
- 6 dates (stirred in boiling water and make a paste)
- 1/2 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1/2 cup coconuts flakes
- 1/3 cup coconut oil/olive oil
- 1 teaspoons cinnamon
- pinch of salt

How to make

Pre heat oven at 325F and lined oven tray with a parchment paper.

Combine the oats, almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, cinnamon and salt.

In a measuring jug, mix the coconut oil, honey and date paste.

Add to oat mixture and mix thoroughly. Spread evenly over the prepared tray, pressing down lightly with the back of a spoon.

Pop in the oven for 10 minutes then toss and again bake for further 10 minutes or until golden.

Remove from the oven and topped with dried fruits and allow to cool before placing in an air tight jar.

serve with yoghurt or milk of your choice.

Overnight Oats



Ingredients

- 2 cup Rolled Oats
- 1 cup Milk
- 1 /2 cup yoghurt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp cinnamon powder
- 2 tsp Maple syrup or Honey

For topping

- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Banana
- Kiwi Fruit
- Nuts
- seeds

How to make

First, mix all ingredients except toppings in a bowl and give a good mix.

Now pour the oat mixture into an airtight container and seal it with a lid cover. place the container in a fridge overnight.

in the suhoor, just add your favourite toppings and quick meal is ready.

Egg Muffins



Ingredients

For egg mixture

- 6 large eggs
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black peppers
- 1 tsp dried basil powder
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1/2 cup feta cheese (optional)
- 1 cup spinach
- Cherry tomatoes
- Red or green bellpeppers

How to make

- Place a rack in the center of your oven and preheat to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a standard 12-cup muffin tin with nonstick spray. Divide the spinach, red bell pepper, green bell pepper, and tomatoes among the cups (they will be about two-thirds of the way full).
- In a large bowl or large measuring cup with a spout (my favorite because it makes the mixture easy to pour), briskly whisk together the eggs, salt, basil, oregano, and pepper until well combined. Carefully fill each muffin cup three-quarters of the way to the top with the egg mixture. Sprinkle the feta evenly over the tops of the cups.

Banana Oats Pancakes

Ingredients

- 2 ripe bananas
- 1 cup oats flour
- 100 ml milk
- 1tsp baking powder
- 1 large egg (for Vegan use flax seeds mix)

For topping

- Yoghurt
- Mixed berries
- sliced bananas
- Seeds(chia seeds, pumpkin seeds



How to make

- Mix all ingredients together and mix well.
- Heat a non-stick pan over a medium heat and spray with a whisper of oil.
- Pour about 2 tbsp of batter into the pan and cook for 1-2 mins, until the base sets and bubbles appear all over the top.
- Flip and cook the other side for a minute. Repeat in batches, making sure the top looks dryish before attempting the flip, or the centre will collapse.
- Delicious with some strawberries, blueberries and flavoured yogurt if wished (optional).

Wholegrain toast with different toppings



Ingredients

4 Whole grain toast

1 Avocado

1 Bannana

2 tsp peanut butter

2 Egg

1 tomato

Salt and pepper

Pumpkin seeds

Peanut Butter-Banana Cinnamon Toast

Spread toast with peanut butter and top with banana slices. Sprinkle with cinnamon to taste.

Avacode egg toast

Top toast with avocado mixture and fried egg. You can replace the fried egg with a scrambled egg. garnish with scallions, if desired

Smoothies



Banana and dates somoothie

- 1 Frozen banana
- 1 cup milk (for non dairy option you can use almond milk)
- 3-4 pitted dates
- 1/3 cup oats
- 1 tsp peanut butter
- 12 tsp chia seeds

Blend all the above ingredients on high, untill Smooth and creamy consistency. and quick suhoor meal is ready.

Easy dip recipes

Hummus

Ingredients

- 2 can chickpeas
- 2 medium garlic cloves minced or grated
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 cup tahini
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika powder
- chickpea juice from the can



How to make it

Blend all ingredients until you get smooth and creamy consistency.

Transfer to a serving plate, top with roasted chickpeas, red onions, cucumber, cherry tomatoes and smoked paprika.

Guacamole



Ingredients

- 3 Ripe avocados
- 1/2 Red onion, finely sliced
- 2 teaspoons of fresh lime juice
- 1/2 cup fresh coriander
- 1 medium fresh tomato
- Pinch of salt and pepper

How to make it

- Pit 3 avocado and use a spoon to scoop them into a mixing bowl, mash with potato masher or by using fork.
- now squeeze lime juice directly over the top of mashed avocado, this will prevent browning.
- add diced tomatoes, red onion, season with salt and peppers and mix well.

Falafel Salad

Ingredients

- 2 cups of chickpeas (soaked for 12 hours)
- 1 medium red onion
- 1/3 bunch of parsley
- 1 tsp sesame
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 2 table spoon olive oil
- salt to taste



How to make

Drain the chickpeas and transfer to a food processor. Add 1 cup parsley, chopped onion, garlic, 1 tablespoon oil, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, cumin and 1/2 teaspoon salt; process until finely and evenly ground. Shape into 12 patties (1 1/2 inches wide), using a generous 2 tablespoons each.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium. Cook the falafel until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn, swirl in 1 tablespoon oil and cook until golden on the other side, 3 to 5 minutes more.

In a bowl add lettuce, cucumber, radishes, cherry tomatoes and falafel and finished with dressing of your own choice.

Chicken Kebab Skewers



Ingredients

- 500g boneless chicken
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- 1 onion
- 1/3 cup yoghurt
- 1 tsp paprika powder
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 2 tablespoon olive oil

Method

- Marinate the chicken and vegetables and leave them for a minimum of 1 hour. The wait will be worth it as the longer you leave it, the more flavour it will have.
- Once the chicken and the vegetables are ready, thread them on skewers.
- Then add to the grill or pan and let it cook for 15-20 or until they are brown, but you must cook it for at least 12 minutes.
- Once done, serve with a dip of your own choice and salads.

Mediterranean Bean salad

Ingredients

- 1 can of chickpeas
- 1 can of red kidney beans
- 1/2 cucumber
- 4-6 cherry tomatoes
- 1/2 cup boiled potatoes
- 1/3 cup red onions
- 1/4 cup of olives
- 1/3 cup Fresh coriander
- 1/3 cup Feta cheese



For dressing

- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/3 cup olive oil

How to make

Whisk together all dressing ingredients in a jar or jug.
In a large bowl add all salad ingredients, drained chickpeas, kidney beans

Combine all the ingredient together and toss well. sprinkle feta cheese .

Baked Dahi Vada



Ingredients

- 1/2 cup urad dal
 - 1/2 cup moong dal
 - 1 tsp baking powder
 - 2 tsp chilli powder
 - 1 tsp cumin seeds
 - 1 tsp chat masala
 - 1 tsp salt
 - 1/2 l yoghurt
 - Fresh coriander
 - 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds
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- wash and soak the lentils for about 3-4 hours. drain all the water and grind them to make a smooth paste, now add all spices and mix well.
 - Now pour spoonfuls in a greased muffin tray.
 - Bake for 15-20 minutes at 350F or till toothpick comes out clear. Now soak in cold water for about 2-3 minutes.
 - Prepare yoghurt with grated garlic, some chat masala.
 - Take vada in a plate or deep bowl and add prepared yoghurt and finely sprinkle pomegranate seeds, coriander or tamarind chutney.

Energy Balls



Ingredients

- 1 cup Medjool dates
- 1 cup coconut flakes
- 1/2 cup Nuts, seeds
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon

- Pit the Medjool dates and soak them in warm water for 10 minutes until they soften.
- Now processed pitted dates, pecan nuts, blitz until a thick dough is formed and the mixture feels sticky.
- scoop out 1-2 tablespoons of the mixture and use your hand to roll it into a ball. Make 10- 12 balls.
- Roll the energy balls into the desiccated coconut, pressing gently so they adhere.

Strawberries lemonade

Ingredients

- 1 cup Strawberries
- Juice of 5 lemons
- 1 cup ice
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- slices of lemon and strawberries



How to make

- Add the water, sugar, lemon juice, strawberries and ice (if using) to the blender.
- Blend on high speed until frothy and smooth.
- Strain the mixture to remove the seeds and add the mixture to a large jug.

You can make with watermelon instead of strawberries

Sleep: A big challenge during Ramadan



Sleep quality might decline in fasting individuals during Ramadan due to the delayed meal time. Eating at night in Ramadan increases the body temperature leading to excessive activity and lack of sleep at night.

Sleep deprivation also affects hormones in the body which control appetite. When sleep deprived your appetite increases, which makes fasting even more difficult.

Sleep should be prioritized as much as your diet during this month.

- Caffeine affects neurotransmitters that control the secretion of melatonin which is the principal hormone responsible for sleep. Therefore, consuming caffeinated drinks like tea, coffee, cola and energy drinks should be avoided during the permitted hours of fasting.
- Evening nap for 20-25 minutes is always a good idea, as it boosts your energy levels.
- Ensure your sleep environment is quiet and dark, and electronic devices such as mobile phones, laptops should be kept out of the bedroom.

Exercise during Ramadan



Exercise during Ramadan can sometimes be challenging due to depleted energy levels and dehydration but there are ways to make it easier

- Intense exercise like weight-bearing and cardio is not recommended. During Ramadan, our body runs on minimal energy stores; therefore, doing high-intensity exercises may damage our body.
- Choosing to walk, instead of driving to the mosque for evening prayers or taking the stairs rather than a lift are just a couple of ways in which you can introduce exercise into your daily life.

Common Health issues during Ramadan

Let us take a look at some common health problems, you might be facing during Ramadan and what can be done to overcome.

Headaches



This is a common problem and has many causes, headaches during a fast could commonly be due to dehydration or hunger, inadequate rest, or the absence of addictive substances such as caffeine or nicotine. A moderate and balanced diet, especially not missing the pre-dawn meal, consuming adequate quantities of fluid and if necessary taking a dose of painkillers such as paracetamol, may all go a long way towards either preventing or reducing the risk of developing a disabling headache.

Headaches can also be prevented by sensible measures such as not exposing oneself to direct sunlight, wearing a hat when out, using sunglasses to reduce the effect of glare from the sun and relieving any tense muscles with a short, gentle massage.

Heartburns and Bloating

The control of heartburn or belching can be aided by eating in moderation and avoiding oily, deep-fried or very spicy food. Reducing your caffeine intake and/or stopping smoking can also be of benefit, if relevant.



Preparations such as peppermint oil may help reduce belching or colic. Sleeping with your head raised on a few pillows and long-term weight loss may also help prevent heartburn.

Constipation

Constipation could be a very irritating problem for someone undertaking a fast. Maintaining good hydration outside the fast, eating healthily, with lots of fruit and vegetables in your diet, increasing the fibre content of your food using as regular as would otherwise be expected.

If the problem persists, a short course of bulk laxatives may help.



I am a Medical Practitioner and Registered Nutritionist, and passionate about diet and disease relation. My aim is to spread evidence-based awareness and knowledge about healthy eating.

Would you like to feel energised, healthy and to get the buzz back into life? I can help you and support you to achieve your health goals, to help you to take control over your health by giving you a personalised nutrition and lifestyle plan

For personalized support contact me or visit my website