

# AMBER HEALTH BITES



## DIABETES & FASTING

DURING

# Ramadan



Here are some frequently asked health Q and A about fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.

### Should you fast if you have diabetes?

People with type 1 diabetes shouldn't usually fast, but people with type 2 diabetes on insulin should be able to. Your doctor may advise adjusting the dose of your insulin, or your insulin type may need to be changed.

### Should you fast if you have high or low blood pressure?

People with well-controlled high blood pressure can

fast. Your doctor may advise you to change your medicine to help you take tablets outside fasting times. Someone with low blood pressure who is otherwise healthy may fast. They must ensure they drink enough fluid and have enough salt.

### From what age can children fast safely?

Children are required to fast when they reach puberty. It isn't harmful. Fasting for children under the age of seven or eight isn't advisable. It's a good idea to make children aware of what fasting involves and to practice fasting for a few hours at a time.

### I am on regular medication. Can I still fast?

Speak to your doctor for advice on specific medicines.

### Could dehydration become so bad that you have to break the fast?

Yes. You could become very dehydrated if you don't drink enough water before the fast. Poor hydration can be made worse by weather conditions and even everyday activities like walking to work or housework.

If you produce very little or no urine, feel disoriented and confused, or faint as a result of dehydration, you must stop fasting and have a drink of water or other fluid. Islam doesn't require you to make

yourself ill when you fast. If a fast is broken, it will need to be compensated for by fasting at a later date.

### Can you take tablets, have injections or use patches while fasting?

Taking tablets breaks the fast. But injections, patches, ear drops, and eye drops don't break the fast as they're not considered to be food and drink - though there are differences of opinion among Muslim scholars on these issues. Islamic law says sick people shouldn't fast.

### Is Ramadan a good time to quit smoking?

Yes. Smoking is bad for your health and Ramadan is a great opportunity to change unhealthy habits, including smoking.



Please follow the **BETTER HEALTH** page (from **Gulf News**) for weekly dose of **Diabetes Health** tips from **Amber Clinics**

Diabetics can enjoy an excellent quality of long and healthy life if their condition is diagnosed at an early stage and managed well

By Dr Gerhard Schwab  
CEO, Gulf Healthcare International

As diabetes is a complex disease with the potential to affect all organs and organ systems, modern diabetes management must be holistic and integrated.

If the three cornerstones of good treatment are considered thoroughly, side effects and complications can be avoided or at least delayed in many cases.

For patients it is difficult however to coordinate all needed appointments without missing important follow-up visits and control exams.



### INTERACTIVE APPROACH

At Amber Clinics, diabetes patients can register for their Diabetes Management Programme. An electronic program will help enrolled patients with their follow-up, where all visits and screening exams are tracked and patients are reminded of their appointments.

Amber Clinics also offer regular patient education to diabetics.

This education programme consists of a series of interactive sessions, each attended by about 8-12 patients and moderated by experienced diabetes nurses and/or physicians.

### 3 CORNERSTONES OF GOOD TREATMENT

1. Modern medication for effective control of blood sugar, blood cholesterol and hypertension
2. Regular organ screening to assure early diagnosis of organ complications. (eyes, skin and heart)
3. Lifestyle changes including regular physical exams and a healthy diet

### BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

Amber Clinics use the Diabetes Conversation Map Education Tools, which are recommended by the American Diabetes Association (with the friendly support of Lilly). Under the moder-



ation of the educator nurse, all relevant elements of successful diabetes management are discussed among the attending patients. Important knowledge will be transferred and personal experiences exchanged between the patients.

Scientific studies have shown that diabetics attending this kind of education had better outcomes, less complications and a better quality of life.

As Amber Clinics consider Diabetes Registry and Interactive Diabetes Education as a

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corporate social responsibility, attendance of both programmes is free of cost for everybody.

Please contact Amber Clinics if you have any questions about the Diabetes Registry, diabetes patient education or any other healthcare topic.

Email: [care@amberclinics.com](mailto:care@amberclinics.com)  
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## **FAST SAFELY DURING RAMADAN**



Diabetes is a condition in which the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body cannot use what we eat properly. During the Holy month of Ramadan people change their eating habits. This may affect blood glucose levels in a way that can make some people feel very unwell.

**Amber Clinics** is here to provide you information on how to stay well.

**Fasting during the month of Ramadan can be good for your health if it's done correctly.**

If you're overweight, it can be an opportunity to lose weight – provided you eat healthily when you break the fast.

**What happens to your body when you fast?**

The changes that happen in the body during a fast depend on the length of the continuous fast.

In the normal state, body glucose, which is stored in the liver and muscles, is the body's main source of energy.

During a fast, this store of glucose is used up first to provide energy.

Later in the fast, once the glucose runs out, fat becomes the next source of energy for the body.

With a prolonged fast of many days or weeks, the body starts using protein and breaking down protein for energy.

This is the technical description of what's commonly known as "starvation".

**How to fast safely during Ramadan**

The way to approach your diet during fasting is similar to the way you should be eating outside Ramadan. You should have a balanced diet, with the right proportion of carbs, fat and protein.

If you're not careful, food eaten during the pre-dawn and dusk meals can cause some weight gain.

Those observing the fast should have at least two meals a day: the pre-dawn meal (Suhoor) and a meal at dusk (Iftar).

It should contain foods from all the major food groups:

- fruit and vegetables
- bread, cereals and potatoes
- meat, fish or alternatives
- milk and dairy foods
- foods containing fat and sugar

Try to limit the amount of sugary foods you eat and instead include healthier sources of carbohydrate in your diet, such as wholegrains, potatoes, vegetables, fruits, legumes, and lower fat dairy products.

Foods high in fiber can help to keep your bowels healthy and add bulk to your meal, helping you to feel full. These include:

- fruit
- vegetables
- pulses
- starchy foods (especially wholegrain varieties)

It's also worth avoiding caffeine-based drinks such as tea, coffee and cola. Caffeine is a diuretic and stimulates faster water loss through urination.



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## Example of an Alfatur Meal

- Home-made vegetable soup (not from soup-powder)
- Cabbage salad, or other vegetable salad of choice
- Stuffed vegetables (squash / eggplant/ grape leaves)
- Baked chicken breast
- Drink adequate water; lemon slices and mint leaves can be added to enhance the taste

## Example of a Suhur Meal

- 2 slices of bread
- Vegetable omelet or hard-boiled egg
- liced vegetables from two vegetables
- Labane or cheese with added za'atar and olive oil
- Herbal tea
- Don't forget to drink an adequate amount of water

## FASTING FOR CHILDREN



### Five tips for your child's first Ramadan

This Ramadan might be the first time your child wants to try fasting, here are the basic essentials:

1. Fasting is a requirement of Islam, but only for healthy adults – for young children it should be something they chose to do
2. It's important for parents to be well informed about the health implications – children need more energy for all that growing and development they do
3. Make sure your child is given a balanced diet before and after they fast – if in doubt, seek the advice of your physician
4. Ramadan is a time for reflection, use this opportunity to discuss with your children the deeper aspects of the holy month
5. Ramadan is also a time for family – celebrate with your children their achievement, no matter how long their fast was, be proud and let them see it

Amber Clinics is very proud to announce that there are over **5000 patients** with Diabetes who have joined & diligently follow our Diabetes Program.

Our utmost gratitude to everyone who continuously support & willingly comply with their care by routinely visiting **Amber Clinics**.

**ENROLL NOW**

In line with our Diabetes Program, Amber Clinics regularly conducts Diabetes Patient Education Sessions. Kindly proceed to our clinics & look for our dedicated patient Educators.

For further details please contact, Mobile : +971 50 1530873  
E-mail : care@amberclinics.com or visit the nearest branch.

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**Dr. Ajit Tharakan**  
Specialist Gastroenterologist

To the outside observer, the concept of Ramadan often sounds like a perfect “detox” and an ideal time to shed those extra pounds.

Fasting for Ramadan can in fact be the perfect time to cut back on refined foods and bad habits like smoking, but unfortunately most people aren't quick to seize this opportunity. On the contrary, most people tend to gain weight during Ramadan as a result of overeating and the fact that the typical iftar meal includes a plethora of heavy, fatty and high calorie foods.

Many seem to be of the mentality that they “deserve” an overly indulgent meal as a reward after having the patience to fast all day. This is not only extremely detrimental to your health, but it also kind of defies the point of fasting to enforce self-discipline and moderation.

## Iftar

This is the time you want to replenish your energy. The key during this time is **NOT TO OVEREAT.**

## 7 TIPS FOR A HEALTHY RAMADAN



We have a tendency to stuff ourselves resulting in bloating, tiredness and feeling sick.

### Suhoor

Don't skip Suhoor. Have a wholesome meal providing you with enough energy to last until Iftar. Whole-wheat food products take around 6-7 hours to digest and hence should help you not to feel too hungry too early.

### Hydration

Drink plenty of water between Iftar and Suhoor. You can also increase water intake by eating hydrating foods. Try adding watermelon to your Suhoor meal or eat it as a sweet treat after Iftar.

### Exercise

Light physical activity is also recommended and will keep your body supple and fit. Do not exercise until at least one hour before iftar so you can rehydrate soon after.

Exercising immediately after iftar is not a good idea, as our blood flow is being directed to our digestive system at that time.

Allow at least 2-3 hours after

eating to begin your exercise routine, to give your body enough time to digest properly.

### Sleep

Sleep is essential to maintaining health and wellbeing. Sleep routine is disrupted as social activities keep people awake well into the night.

Try to go to bed by 11 pm and have 4 hours' sleep following iftar, then wake up at 3.30 am ready for suhoor and fajr and return back to sleep at around 5 am for 2 hours.

If your energy levels are still low during the working day, a power nap can be helpful. Try not to sleep for longer than 20 minutes during this daytime nap as your body will go into deep sleep and you will wake feeling tired and groggy.

Power naps are especially important for those who feel sleepy when driving home at the end of the day.

### Smoking

Take the strength and discipline developed during fasting to give up smoking this Ramadan.

### Things to avoid

Avoid high-fat, high-sugar content, and highly-processed food – fried food, ghee, pakoras, biryanis, Indian sweets, (and the list goes on...!).

Drinks with high caffeine content (coffee & tea) should be avoided as they cause dehydration.

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