

Ramadan fasting in pregnancy

Maternity Services

Information for Patients

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Are there any risks with religious fasting during pregnancy?

There is not enough evidence to say that fasting during a healthy pregnancy is harmful to the mother and unborn baby.

What is the Islamic ruling for Ramadan fasting in pregnancy?

Ramadan is a blessed month in the Islamic calendar. Muslims are expected to take part in daily fasts for an entire month. Some people are not required to fast. These are the elderly, children, people who are sick, travellers and menstruating women. This also applies to pregnant and breastfeeding women who are sick or fear that fasting may put their own and their child's health at risk.

Should I fast or should I not fast?

We know that the choice to fast can be hard. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, talk with your midwife about this.

If you are worried about your health or your baby's health, it is **best not to fast**. For example, if you have diabetes, low iron, or any other health concerns then we advise you not to fast.

If you begin your day by fasting and feel unwell at any time, then you may break your fast by drinking a glass of water. You can make up broken fasts or missed fasts at any time outside Ramadan. Or, you can give a fixed sum of money to charity to make up the missed fasts. This is known as 'Fidya'.

If you are unsure and would like more help please speak to your midwife who will give you respectful and correct advice.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

How can I fast safely?

• **Have a healthy diet when you break your fast:**

Different cultures eat different foods during Ramadan. To stay healthy you need to eat a mix of healthy foods. Some foods are better than others:

Foods to have when you break your fast:

- Foods that are rich in fibre like cereals, whole grain and almost all fruits.
- Dates, milk and oily fish like sardines.
- Foods that have iron in them like dark leafy vegetables, pulses, lentils, beans and dried fruits.

Foods not to eat when you break your fast:

- Deep fried food and food high in fat like samosas.
- Heavily processed and high in sugar foods like cakes, sweets and white bread.

• **Keep hydrated during non-fasting hours:**

It is important to drink lots of water in the non-fasting hours. This lowers the risk of dehydration, pee (urine) infection and blood clots (called deep vein thrombosis (DVT)). Feeling thirsty or having dark coloured pee may be signs that you are dehydrated. If this happens then you should break your fast and drink lots of water.

• **Take it easy while fasting:**

Fasting can make you feel tired, especially in summer. Try not to do too much during the day. Do not take part in exercise until 2 hours after breaking fast ('Iftar'). You can walk and take part in daily activities. Remember to also rest and stay cool. Do not tire yourself out during fasting hours.

• **Keep checking your baby's movements:**

You must feel baby's movements every day, especially when taking part in religious fasting. **If you are worried about your baby's movements**, then contact the Leicester Maternity Services on **0116 258 6111** right away.

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