

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 considered as a blessed month in the Islamic calendar when Muslims are expected to take part in daily fasts for an entire month. Although fasting during Ramadan is expected for all Muslims, some people are not required to fast. This includes the elderly, children, individuals who are sick, travellers and menstruating women. This rule 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 understand that the decision to fast is difficult. You can talk to your midwife about this. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding and have any concerns about your health or your pregnancy, then it is advisable not to fast. For example, if you have diabetes, low iron, or any other health concerns then it is advisable not to fast. Remember, if you do begin your day by fasting and feel unwell at any time, then you may break your fast by drinking a glass of water. Broken fasts or missed fasts can be made up at any other time outside Ramadan, before the arrival of the next Ramadan. Alternatively, a fixed sum of money can be given to charity; this is known as 'Fidya'.

If you are unsure and would like more information please speak to your midwife who will provide you with respectful and appropriate advice.

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

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How can I fast safely?

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

In different cultures, people eat and drink differently during Ramadan. We recommend having a varied healthy diet. Some foods are better than others at helping you through the fasting hours, for example:

Foods to include in your diet when you break your fast:

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

Foods to avoid when you break your fast:

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

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

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

- **Limit your daily activity and exercise:**

Fasting, particularly in the summer months, can make you feel tired. It is therefore recommended not to take part in exercise until 2 hours after breaking fast ('Iftar'). You can walk and take part in daily activities, but remember to also rest and stay cool. Do not tire yourself out during fasting hours.

- **Continue to monitor your baby's movements:**

It is important that you continue to feel baby's movements every day, especially when taking part in religious fasting. **If you are worried about your baby's movements, then immediately contact the Maternity Assessment Unit at the hospital where you are booked (Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 4834 or Leicester General Hospital: 0116 258 4808).**

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