



A REVIEW ON HOLY RAMADAN: A BLESSED MONTH FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

During the fast period, which generally lasts about 12 h, the existent must refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, sexual intercourse, and bandaging from daylight (Suhoor) to evening (Iftar). According to Muslims, Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar when the Quran was transferred down by Allah to the humanity. For this reason, every time on average, one and a half billion Muslims around the world observe the fast during this holy month of Ramadan from daylight to evening for around 29 or 30 days. The Islamic calendar, being a lunar timetable, is 10 days shorter than the Gregorian calendar and thus Ramadan moves forward by 10 days each time. Thus Muslims experience Ramadan in different seasons throughout the course of the lives. In this holy month all Muslims are needed to restrain from food and drink from dawn to dusk for 30 days. Muslims believe that fasting during Ramadan improves tone- discipline, and increases spirituality, inner peace, and mindfulness of the difficulty suffered by those who don't have enough food and constantly go empty without choice.

KEYWORDS: Holy Ramadan, Fasting, Physical health, Mental health.

INTRODUCTION

About one-fourth (1.6 billion) Muslims were estimated to make up the world's population, and Islam is the second largest religion after Christianity. One of the religious rituals of healthy adult Muslims is fasting from daylight to evening in Ramadan (during 29 or 30 days). Fasting means avoiding drinking and eating over time ages that vary from 13 to 18 h a day, depending on the season. Islamic countries have some of the most vibrant political and profitable centers in the world with special religious and cultural practices, like as the annual Hajj of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, the pilgrimage of Imam Reza in Mashhad, and the consumption of unique animal foods like as camels. About 2.5 million Muslims from Islamic countries travel to Mecca each time to perform the Umrah pilgrimage. Also, further than 20 million people visit Karbala in Iraq, another important Shia Muslim religious event, which goes on for 40 days. Piecemeal from the spiritual experience that a person undergoes during Ramadan fasting, there are tremendous scientific benefits of the month-long fasting. Though the intent of fasting should purely be faith, obedience and to seek the mercy of Allah, the huge array of scientific and health advantages that this month brings along should again prop in strengthening the faith of a religionist.

What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth and the holiest month in the Islamic timetable. Muslims fast, abstain from pleasures,

and supplicate during Ramadan to draw near to Allah. It's also a time for all the families to come together and enjoy the blessings of Allah. Muslims start fasting from the following day after the crescent moon appears in the sky, motioning the morning of a new month. As a result, Ramadan doesn't begin in numerous countries until religious leaders declare that they've personally seen the crescent moon. The month full of fasting ends with the worldwide celebration of the festival of Eid ul Fitr. It's recommended that before daylight, Muslims eat a prefast meal known as suhur. This meal frequently resembles breakfast, but in some societies it may include further dinner-suchlike foods. After eve, Muslims break their fast with iftar, a meal which generally starts with dates and water or milk, followed by regale. Muslims are permitted to have a snack at night between those two meals, and hydration is encouraged, especially when Ramadan falls during summer.



Fig 1: Doing of Ramadan.

Who is exempt from fasting?

Fasting during Ramadan is obligatory for nearly all Muslims. However, the Holy Qur'an states that those who are exempted from fasting includes;

- Children;
- Women who are menstruating;
- Elderly or frail cases;
- Those suffering with a severe psychological illness or condition;
- Those persons who are suffering with a chronic illness, where fasting can cause detriment to health.

The physical benefits of fasting

Our bodies are an amanah (trust) from Allah and fasting helps to take care of that amanah! There are some of the physical health benefits of regular fasting such as;

- It protects you from obesity and associated chronic ailments i. e. It causes weight loss and maintenance among fat and obese people.
- It reduces inflammation.
- It boosts cognitive performance and may help in preventing neuro-degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's disease and stroke.
- It controls blood sugar level by reducing insulin resistance
- It maintains cardiovascular health. There's a greatly improved survival rate and recovery of heart functions and modulates cardiovascular threats.
- It reduces the fat mass, LDL cholesterol & total cholesterol.
- There's equivalent reduction in blood pressure.
- There's a reduction in serum triglycerides, markers of oxidative stress and inflammation.
- During fasting days Circulating ketone levels are also elevated.

Positive goods on psychological and spiritual well being

Ramadan is a great time of the year and provides great benefits for spiritual renewal as well. However, we can get advantages immensely from all the acts of worship that we can perform which are the enumeration of the Quran,

the charity for the poor, If we make proper use of our time during Ramadan. By means of these acts of worship, we shall be forgiven of our former sins InshaAllah by the Almighty. The act of fasting in Ramadan is a constant memorial of prohibition from wrong doings like dependence, alcoholism, smoking, immorality and other effects. This month can educate us a lot about self- control and can help us in the long run against all kinds of social and moral immoralities by giving us the "introductory month". It also brings immense spiritual satisfaction which is very helpful against feelings of negative studies, anxiety, fear attacks, and depression. This month has been observed to bring a positive change to numerous people struggling with neurological and psychiatric conditions.

Positive effect on emotional and psychological responses

Emotional responses to outside stimulants can affect us in a number of ways by driving various complex pathways within numerous systems inside the body. The hormones buried by our bodies in response to emotional stress culminate in a buildup of metabolic wastes. Thus advanced the levels of emotional stress, greater would be the accumulation of metabolic wastes. Over the time, this can affect detoxification and natural healing processes. During Ramadan, our emotional stress levels are kept in check which can appreciatively affect the detoxification and the healing processes. Positive emotional responses also have positive goods on memory and aid in delaying conditions like ageing, obesity, and heart failure.

1. Enhances willpower

Fasting during Ramadan requires psychological fortitude and the keenness to forego immediate enjoyment for carrying out long- term aspirations. Fasting for a complete month induces a sense of happiness, focus, and self- control. These attributes can be employed in varied sects of life.

2. Increases alertness

Individuals who fast appear to have advanced levels of vigilance and attention. Food is converted into glucose by the human body, and too much of it causes sluggishness and fatigue. Fasting helps the body regulate glucose degrees, reducing sluggishness and adding alertness.

3. Uplifts the mood and mental clarity

Fasting can be a system of supercharging the brain, adding growth and development of new brain cells, in turn edging responses to information in the world around us. Studies also show that fasting can also make the brain more flexible to stress, further adaptable to change, and can enhance mood, memory and even learning capacity. Muslims witness an enhanced sense of achievement, reward, pride, and control after hours of fasting. Fasting can improve & boost self- esteem and a sense of accomplishment. At the same time, fasting and the

pleasure felt after completing a challenging activity serve as an important feel-good stimulant on the brain.

Major Physical beneficial effects of Ramadan fasting are;

1. Protection from obesity and chronic conditions

Fasting throughout Ramadan may help in preventing obesity and other chronic conditions like as diabetes. Ramadan fasting needs abstaining from the consumption of food and water between daylight and evening. Hence, it enhances the degrees of proteins providing insulin resistance. It may also offers protection against the risks of a fat and sugar-rich diet.

2. Lowering cholesterol & refining blood sugar level

It lowers blood cholesterol, as Ramadan Fasting stimulates the lipid profile. Accordingly, it prevents heart attacks, strokes, and other diseases. Also, if individuals maintain a healthy diet after month of Ramadan, then individuals will retain the freshly reduced cholesterol level.

3. Improved digestive system

Observing Ramadan and fasting appreciatively impacts one lifestyle and digestive system. A human body get naturally detoxifies after a month of flushing out of the toxins in the body. Further, it balances the heat generation and acidity levels in the human stomach. Fasting throughout the holy month of Ramadan is one of Islam's most essential commandments. Muslims fast for 12-14 hours each day during Ramadan. They get up early for prayers, eat before daylight, sleep later, and eat substantial meals after dusk to replenish their energy and fluid stores. Because of this, eating habits, length of sleep and sleep pattern can change in a formative way. Fasting throughout the holy month of Ramadan improves psychological health by lowering depression, anxiety, and stress levels.

2. Prevents cancer

Many researches have been released in the last few years suggesting that Ramadan Fasting can lower health threat factors. It can also reverse the symptoms of severe health ailments like as cancer. According to the research, this could be attributed to reduced glucose conflation in the blood, balanced nutritive input, and increased generation of tumor- killing cells.

3. Helps in Alzheimer

There are many therapeutic choices for those who develop Alzheimer's, which causes ever- worsening cognitive and behavioral issues. Fasting is a remedy option that's rapidly gaining traction outside of the area of pharmaceuticals and treatments. Ramadan Fasting, generally promoted as a weight- loss approach, has been demonstrated in research to significantly relieve Alzheimer's symptoms and decline in slow cognitive development in rats.

4. Radiant Complexion/Anti-ageing

It's said that fasting could potentially retard down the aging process, keeping you younger and fitter for longer and it could also potentially increase lifetime. Fasting tends to the production of restored tissues and cells within the human body, degrading unnecessary cells in the process. This enables you to produce collagen, leading to healthier and further radiant skin.

5. Immune System

Partaking in fasting promotes recovery in the human body as it applies core focus to its immune system and metabolism as opposed to concentrating on digestion, further enhancing muscle growth in the process. The immune system is majorly comprised of white blood cells and fasting encourages the body to recycle any old white blood cells which results in a healthier, more robust immune system. Human body regenerates stem cells that consist of red and white blood cells along with platelets once body consumes food again.

6. Improves Metabolism

Since ancient times, scientists from different faiths and backgrounds have long argued that fasting could help metabolism renew itself, driving a detoxification process in the human body. One of the more obvious results of fasting is easing obesity; fasting prompts the liver's enzymes to break down cholesterol and fats to convert them into bile acid, which, in turn, converts to heat eventually stimulating faster metabolism. Naturally, fasting also decreases the appetite which reduces the hunger hormone levels in the body. You may just find your portion sizes being significantly smaller following a period of fasting.

7. Weight Loss

Fasting means to refrain the body from food or drink or even both at the same time. When the human body is experiencing the starvation process, the body turns to fat in order to use and burn any stored energy first. However, fasting can do wonders for weight loss particularly for loss of adipose tissues in the body, leading to better physical structure overall, if done rightly. Incorporating intermittent fasting into a regular resistance training regime will promote major fat loss with quicker results.

8. Restoration of healthy gut microbiota

It has also been noted that fasting of Ramadan promotes the growth of gut microbes which have a good effect on gut health, digestion and overall gut metabolism.

9. Delay in vascular ageing

Fasting can delay aging and promotes long life. Upon extended fasting, the primary carbohydrate energy used by the body which is called glucose gets exhausted and our body rather utilizes, which are called "Ketone Bodies" produced from fat metabolism, to meet the energy requirements of body. One of the types of ketone bodies, acetone, is a volatile substance which can be detected in our breath especially after Asar prayer.

Scientifically speaking, this is “the smell of the Muslim who is observing fast which has been liked by Almighty” according to Sahih Hadith. Another ketone body known as β -hydroxybutyrate has been shown to play a part in delaying vascular ageing in endothelial cells by promoting cell division and preventing senescence caused by the accumulation of damaged DNA.

10. Regulates ‘bad’ cholesterol

Numerous people aim to lose some weight by fasting. Still, a recent study found that fasting also affects the lipid profile. This results in reduced blood cholesterol, which can keep heart attacks, strokes and other conditions at bay.

11. Curbed appetite

Fasting in Ramadan gives a positive U-turn to the routine life and digestive system. As body gets used to eating less and hence digestive system gets a chance to rest and stomach gradually shrinks in size. This reduces the appetite, and the results can last longer than numerous trending diets.

12. A month-long detox

Fasting not only uses fat reserves, but also cleanses body from damaging toxins that might be present in fat deposits. With the digestive system on a month-long overhaul, body naturally detoxifies, giving the occasion to continue a healthier life beyond Ramadan.



Fig. 2: Health Benefits of fasting in Ramadan.

The Social benefits of Ramadan

During Ramadan, it's traditional for Muslims to collect and contribute to charities. Communities come together to contribute to regional mosques for good causes. This time is a period of reflection for numerous; many find new awareness of their lives and finds feelings of appreciativeness. Giving to charity is very much important as that of fasting. Muslims are obliged to give 2.5% of their means to charity, (this is known as Zakah) and is another of the five pillars of Islam. Ramadan is the month of selflessness and charity. Ramadan develops spiritual, social and moral values. During this time the poor are given attention and charity,

and faith led neighborhoods practice hospitality. Fasting aims to establish equality between the rich and poor, as the rich experience hunger and learn to show respect and appreciate the less fortunate.



Fig. 3: Social Benefits of Ramadan.

Ways to help improve the health during Ramadan

1. Have a healthy Iftar

It's important that healthy practices should be embraced along with the natural benefits of Ramadan, Breaking fast with three dates and water gives body an instant energy and hydration boost ahead of main meal. Take it easy with the quantum of heavy, delicate and fried foods, as well as salty and sugary dishes. Consider choosing for fish and slender cuts of meat, wholegrain or brown rice and pasta as well as remembering to include greens. Taking time while eating, and keeping a portion control will also helps in digestion and prevents weight gain.

2. Make Suhoor wholesome

Like breakfast, Suhoor should be the most important mess of the day. Taking a balanced Suhoor with nutrient-rich food like oatmeal, cheese, fruits and vegetables makes fast healthier. Certain foods which have lower glycemic index including oats, quinoa, multigrain and wholegrain breads, hummus and yoghurt are good options as they release energy slowly throughout the day. Remember to drink abundance of water, milk, and fresh juices rather than tea and coffee will keep hydrated during fasting hours.

3. Stay hydrated

A little dehydration is natural, and this can lead to slight headaches and lack of attention. Still, one can help keep themselves hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids in the Iftar & Suhoor hours.

4. Exercise moderately

Fasting and dehydration can naturally bring to feel sleepy and make Ramadan days sedentary. Still, with proper fluid input one should also try to exercise in moderate quantities. Remaining active helps reduce fatigue, gives body the strength to keep going and is a good chance to lose weight if needed. Still, exercise

during fasting hours can be dehydrating and dangerous. It's best to exercise just before Suhoor or a few hours after Iftar to make the utmost of exercises.

5. Pick up healthy habits and drop the unhealthy habits

Ramadan is also a chance for you to ditch dependences like smoking or sugar. With a little self-control one can continue to restrain from your dependences during and after dieting hours as well. Ramadan is also a great time to start and maintain healthy habits like eating further greens, drinking additional water and taking regular exercise.

CONCLUSION

The Holy Month is an occasion for us to address any unhealthy actions. Ramadan is an excellent time to reflect upon and estimate any unhealthy habits such as smoking, alcohol, drugs or extreme internet use, which can be amended during this month. Away from the religious obligations upon Muslims during the Holy month of Ramadan, fasting has innumerable health benefits, too. From bettered weight management and healthier blood cell regeneration through to better heart function and vascular good, fasting has become quite the go-to system of keeping youthful, fit and healthy. It's Sunnah to fast, not only in Ramadan, but also regularly throughout the time and there are clearly numerous health benefits to it.

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