



جامعة الفيصل
Alfaisal University



Fasting is Wellness

Ramadan/March 2025 Edition
Mindful Fasting, Meaningful Growth

Greetings from AU-WHO

As the blessed month of Ramadan approaches the Alfaisal University Wellbeing and Health Office (AU-WHO) extends warm greetings to our diverse and vibrant community. In this 2025 edition of our newsletter, we aim to support your holistic well-being during this sacred time of fasting, reflection, and community.

This year, we focus on the theme "**Mindful Fasting, Meaningful Growth**", exploring how intentional practices during Ramadan can cultivate both physical wellness and spiritual development. Through evidence-based recommendations and community engagement opportunities, we hope to enhance your Ramadan experience and help you emerge from this month revitalized in body, mind, and spirit.

Research Update: The Science of Fasting

Recent research continues to validate the numerous health benefits associated with intermittent fasting, similar to the pattern observed during Ramadan:

- **Metabolic Health** - Studies have shown that time-restricted eating patterns can improve insulin sensitivity and glucose regulation. Research published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that intermittent fasting can activate cellular pathways that enhance metabolic flexibility and energy efficiency (de Cabo & Mattson, 2019)
<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/>
- **Cognitive Function** - Fasting has been linked to improved brain health through the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which supports cognitive function and neuroplasticity. This may enhance mental clarity during Ramadan, particularly when paired with adequate hydration and sleep (Mattson et al., 2020).
<https://www.nature.com/articles/nrn.2017.156>
- **Cellular Regeneration** - The process of autophagy - cellular "self-cleaning" - is stimulated during fasting periods, potentially contributing to longevity and cellular health. This natural detoxification process may be optimized during Ramadan fasting when proper nutrition is maintained during non-fasting hours (Bagherniya et al., 2018).
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30172870/>

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First, Stay Safe while Fasting ! What You Need to Know ?

1. Consult Your Doctor Before Fasting

- If you have diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, or any other chronic condition, consult your doctor before deciding to fast. Your doctor can help determine if fasting is safe for you and may adjust your medication schedule accordingly.



2. Monitor Your Health Closely

- Check your blood sugar levels regularly if you have diabetes.
- Monitor your blood pressure if you have hypertension.
- **Stay aware of any warning signs such as dizziness, extreme fatigue, dehydration, or abnormal heartbeats.**



3. Adjust Medication Schedules

- If you take medications, work with your doctor to modify your dosing schedule.
- Some medications may need to be taken at Suhoor and Iftar instead of during the day.
- **Never stop or change medications without medical advice.**



4. Recognize When to Break Your Fast

- If you experience severe weakness, dizziness, confusion, or dangerously high/low blood sugar, it is safer to break your fast and seek medical attention.



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Wellness Pillars for Ramadan 2025



Hydration: A Strategic Approach

With fasting periods extending approximately 11-15 hours in March 2025, strategic hydration becomes crucial:

- **Calculate your Hydration** - Research suggests individualizing water intake based on body weight. A formula recommended by nutrition scientists is consuming 30-35 ml of water per kg of body weight distributed throughout non-fasting hours (Perrier et al., 2020).
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7987589/>
- **Hydration Quality** - Enhance water absorption by adding natural electrolytes through a pinch of salt (preferably pink Himalayan salt) and a squeeze of lemon. Consider incorporating hydrating foods such as cucumber, watermelon, and yogurt during iftar and suhoor (Dennis et al., 2010).
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1038/oby.2009.235>
- **Hydration Timing & Quantity** - Space water consumption rather than consuming large quantities at once, which can overburden the kidneys and reduce absorption. Set a schedule of 1-2 glasses per hour between iftar and suhoor (Muñoz et al., 2019).
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25963107/>



Sleep Optimization

The altered schedule during Ramadan presents both challenges and opportunities for sleep quality:

- **Biphasic Sleep Pattern** - Research suggests that adapting to a "segmented sleep" approach may align well with Ramadan's schedule. This involves a longer sleep period after taraweeh prayers and a shorter sleep period after suhoor.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02640414.2012.693622>
<https://bmcmmededuc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6920-12-61>
- Optimize your bedroom for quality sleep by ensuring darkness, comfortable temperature (18-20°C), and minimizing noise disruptions. This becomes especially important when sleep hours shift during Ramadan.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4400203/>
- **Pre-Sleep Nutrition** - Foods containing tryptophan, magnesium, and B vitamins at iftar can support melatonin production and improve sleep quality. Examples include bananas, almonds, and whole grains.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5015038/>

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Nutrition Planning

Thoughtful meal planning can maintain energy levels and support overall health during fasting:

- **Suhoor Optimization** - Research indicates that meals combining complex carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fats provide sustained energy throughout fasting hours. Consider options like whole grain porridge with nuts, seeds, and a boiled egg.
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41430-018-0189-8>
- **Iftar Balance** - Begin breaking your fast with dates and water, followed by a balanced meal incorporating all food groups. Recent studies highlight the importance of portion control even during non-fasting hours to maintain metabolic benefits.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32157368/>
- **Micronutrient Focus** - Emphasize foods rich in magnesium, potassium, and B vitamins, which may be depleted during fasting. Dark leafy greens, bananas, legumes, and seeds are excellent sources. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35016991/>

Mindful Movement

Physical activity during Ramadan should be tailored to energy levels and fasting schedule:

- **Optimal Exercise Timing** - Research indicates that the best time to exercise during Ramadan is before the fast begins (pre-dawn). As highlighted by Dr. Marc Bubbs on the "Dr. Bubbs' Performance Nutrition Podcast," "Strategic morning exercise during fasting periods like Ramadan can enhance metabolic adaptation and preserve lean muscle tissue when paired with appropriate nutrition timing." This pre-fast timing allows for proper hydration and energy replenishment immediately after activity.
<https://www.drububbs.com/podcast>
- **Indoor/Outdoor Options** - With Riyadh's variable March temperatures, consider indoor mall walking when outdoor conditions are extreme. Various malls such as Kingdom Center and Al Nakheel Mall offer climate-controlled environments for consistent walking routines. When weather permits, the King Abdullah Financial District (KAJD) walking paths and Alfaisal University campus grounds provide excellent outdoor options.
- **Type and Intensity** - Studies indicate that maintaining fitness during Ramadan is achievable by reducing exercise intensity by approximately 30% while preserving frequency. Consider activities like walking, light resistance training, or gentle yoga.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20519255/>
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02640414.2012.687114>
- **Movement Snacking** - Incorporate brief "movement snacks" throughout non-fasting hours - two-minute stretching sessions, short walks, or simple mobility exercises - to maintain circulation and energy levels.
<https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-018-0748-3>



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Mental Wellness Practices

The spiritual dimension of Ramadan offers unique opportunities for enhancing mental health:

- **Mindfulness Integration** - Pair spiritual practices with mindfulness techniques. Research shows that mindful prayer and meditation can significantly reduce stress hormones and improve psychological well-being
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/book/9780128112823/religion-and-mental-health>
- **Gratitude Practice** - Establish a daily gratitude ritual during Ramadan, which has been shown to increase happiness and life satisfaction. Consider keeping a gratitude journal to record blessings each day
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20451313/>
https://www.amazon.com/Gratitude-Journal-I-am-thankful/dp/B0DRNYCGPP/ref=sr_1_1?crid=CTKRFPD7SFW3&dib=eyJ2IjojMSJ9.tBkV4N4hCLui6doaE3dBzONkCF_WjboMDUW98AfYKK3pgb0gdJh5sXoWp6XeDNJtyXalDGPsA06lAvfWyJhWTCKTMndN9dmjUPpmVde9OsU.qRR8QDtNo3g7wqnMIWpbO_YfMbPZ4ZqLH8sQgmvwKo&dib_tag=se&keywords=amy+z+gratitude&qid=1740628004&srefix=amy+z+gratitude%2Caps%2C205&sr=8-1
- **Digital Detox...NO MO FOMO:** Designate specific hours for disconnecting from digital devices, allowing for deeper spiritual connection and mental rest. Studies indicate that reducing screen time can improve sleep quality and reduce anxiety.
<https://guilfordjournals.com/doi/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751>

Cultural Connection

Global Ramadan Practices

This year, we celebrate the beautiful diversity of Ramadan traditions across cultures:

- **Featured Region: Southeast Asia:** Explore the vibrant Ramadan traditions from Malaysia and Indonesia, where communal meals called "berbuka puasa" bring communities together with unique dishes like kolak (sweet coconut dessert) and dates infused with local spices.
- **Community Sharing:** We invite our multicultural Alfaisal community to share their unique Ramadan traditions through our digital platform. Submit a brief description and photo of your family's practices to au-who@alfaisal.edu.

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Nutritious Recipe Spotlight

Balanced Suhoor Bowl

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 cup milk (dairy or plant-based)
- 1/4 cup Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon honey or date syrup
- 1/4 cup mixed nuts (almonds, walnuts)
- 1/2 cup mixed berries or chopped fruits
- Cinnamon to taste

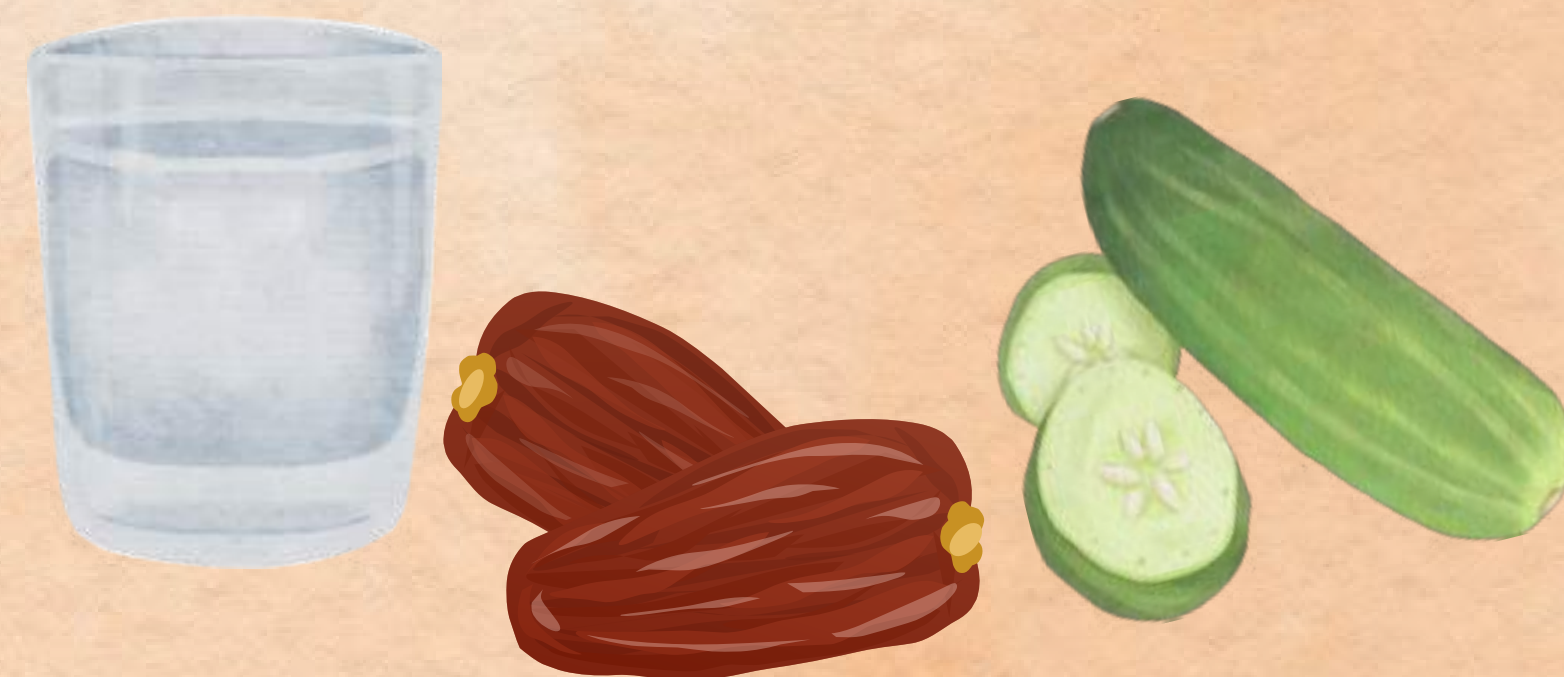


Method: Mix all ingredients except fruit and refrigerate overnight. Add fresh fruit before serving. This provides complex carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fats for sustained energy.

Hydrating Iftar Starter

Ingredients:

- 3 dates
- 1 cup coconut water
- 1/2 cup cucumber, diced
- 1/4 cup mint leaves
- Squeeze of lemon
- Pinch of pink Himalayan salt (very small pinch)



Method: Blend all ingredients except dates into a refreshing drink. Serve with dates on the side to break your fast. This combination provides natural sugars, electrolytes, and hydration.

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Community Initiatives for Ramadan 2025

Campus Activities

- **WeRun Returns:** Building on last year's success, our community runs will continue after iftar at 10:00PM every Tuesday throughout Ramadan. Meeting point: University Main Entrance.

Service Opportunities

- **Campus Food Bank:** Contribute to our Ramadan food drive supporting families in need. CAS and SDC run those drives every year.
- **Skills Share:** Volunteer to teach a skill or share knowledge with the community during Ramadan. Whether it's cooking, calligraphy, or computer skills, your expertise can benefit others.

Upcoming Events & Opportunities

Distinguished Speaker Series

- **Exclusive Lecture by Prof. Helen Batty-**



We are honored to feature Prof. Helen Batty, Clinical Professor of Public Health, in a special recorded lecture on **"The Science of Therapeutic Fasting."**

Gain expert insights into the metabolic benefits of fasting and its impact on overall health. Scan the attached QR code to watch the full presentation

- Don't hesitate to share your thoughts and questions with us via email! We will be hosting a live **follow-up webinar on March 18th at 2:00 PM**, to address your questions and dive deeper into the topic.

Digital Community Platform

- **Coming Soon:** We're excited to announce the upcoming launch of a dedicated community platform for Alfaisal University wellness initiatives. This digital space will allow for resource sharing, community support, and ongoing wellness conversations and various events. More details will be announced soon - stay tuned!

AU-WHO Wellbeing Assessment

- **Your Voice Matters:** Help us better serve the Alfaisal community by completing our Campus Wellbeing Needs Assessment. This brief questionnaire will help identify priorities for future wellness programming and resources.



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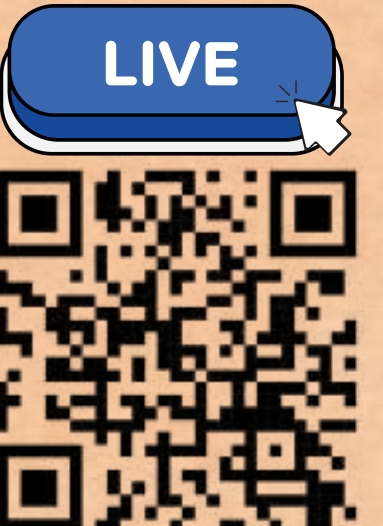
Sustainability Focus: Mindful Consumption

Ramadan offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on our consumption habits and their environmental impact:

- **Reducing Food Waste:** Recent studies show that food waste increases by up to 25% during Ramadan in some Muslim-majority countries. Plan meals carefully, repurpose leftovers, and consider donating excess food to those in need.
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0956053X19305197?via%3Dihub>
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/jeim-03-2018-0051/full/html>
- **Eco-Friendly Iftar Gatherings:** Choose reusable plates, cups, and utensils for iftar gatherings. If disposables are necessary, opt for biodegradable alternatives made from plant materials.

Mark your calendar !

Set a reminder **on Thursday, March 18, 2025, at 2:00 PM**, don't miss the opportunity to engage in an insightful **Q&A session with Prof. Helen Batty on *The Science of Therapeutic Fasting***. Whether you're at home or in the office, you can join the conversation, share your thoughts, and your questions. Simply by scanning the attached QR code.



Closing Thoughts

As we prepare for Ramadan 2025, the AU-WHO team invites you to approach this sacred month with intention and mindfulness. By integrating evidence-based wellness practices with spiritual devotion, we can experience the full transformative potential of Ramadan! 😊

We welcome your feedback, questions, and suggestions. Contact us at au-who@alfaisal.edu

Wishing you a blessed, healthy, and meaningful Ramadan.

The AU-WHO Team