occupational health

Medical guidance notes and information

Healthy Eating during Ramadan

Ramadan is a month when healthy Muslims abstain from food and drink during daylight hours-from sunrise to sunset.
Health problems can arise from lack of sleep, over eating prior to fasting and inappropriate diet during Ramadan.

IMPORTANT – PEOPLE WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS SHOULD CONSULT THEIR GP TO DISCUSS FASTING AND HOW IT MIGHT IMPACT ON THEIR CONDITION AND MEDICATION REGIME.

- Diet should not differ greatly from the normal diet. It should be balanced and simple.
- Eat complex carbohydrates, especially before sunrise. These take longer to digest and will therefore help to reduce hunger during the day. Examples of complex carbohydrates are: lentils, beans, wheat, barley and unrefined rice.
- Eat a good balanced pre-dawn meal as this will make fasting more manageable.
- Eat moderate amounts from all other food groups – dairy, fruit, vegetables, and protein such as meat, poultry, fish and pulses.
- Drink plenty of water and fruit juice between Iftar and bedtime.
- Eat fruit such as dates and bananas which are a good source of carbohydrates.
- Avoid fried and spicy foods. Limit foods high in sugar e.g. sweets, biscuits and cakes.
- Take regular light exercise such as walking.

Problems

- Indigestion. Fasting can cause increased acidity in the stomach. Try to eat foods rich in fibre such as wholemeal bread, vegetables and humus.
- Headache. Try to reduce the amount of caffeine and nicotine prior to Ramadan. This will help reduce headaches caused by nicotine and caffeine withdrawal.
- Tiredness. Sudden withdrawal from caffeine and nicotine can cause lethargy.
- Dehydration. Drink plenty of water and fruit juices between Iftar and bedtime and before sunrise.

Medical Conditions

Diabetes

- Diabetics on oral medications or insulin should always consult their GP before fasting as in these cases planning medication regime and diet in advance is essential.
- Diet controlled diabetics should be able to fast the same way as non diabetics as long as they stick to a healthy diet.

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Pregnancy

- Pregnant women do not have to fast if they are concerned that fasting would harm their baby or them.
- If you are pregnant, consult your GP or midwife regarding adequate nutrition during Ramadan and pregnancy so that you can make an informed decision on fasting.
- It is essential that expectant and breast feeding mothers take adequate amounts of fluid.

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