

## SAWM - FASTING

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 13 March 2013 21:03 - Last Updated Friday, 15 March 2013 20:47

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The word 'Sawm' refers to the obligation for Muslims to fast during the month of Ramadhan, the ninth month of the Islamic Calendar. Muslims do not only abstain from physical things during Ramadan. They are also expected to do their best to avoid evil thoughts and deeds as well. During the days of Ramadan all adult Muslims abstain from the following things during the hours of daylight, from sunrise to sunset:

Eating or drinking of any sort  
Smoking  
Sexual activity  
Any wrong doing which is prohibited in Islam

### **There are many reasons for fasting:**

- First and foremost is the fact that by fasting, Muslims are obeying the commands of Allah.
- Fasting also reminds Muslims to remember the poor and needy who do not have food or provisions. The hunger that is felt during Ramadhan gives Muslims some indication of the suffering of others and acts as a persuasion to remember these people and to help them.
- Fasting also helps Muslims to develop their character and faith. Fasting teaches believers self-control helping them to free themselves from the bonds of reliance on set meal times. Abstaining from food and drink also helps Muslims to focus on worship, giving them time to reflect on their faith and strengthen it.

Recently, scientists have discovered many physical benefits of fasting. The research shows, during the time that a person is not eating, the body's digestive system can focus on its other functions, such as balancing the red and white blood cell count, repairing organs or any other of its fourteen important functions, rather than focusing constantly on the digestion of food. Therefore fasting can also improve a person's health, as their organs are able to repair and work properly.

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Whilst fasting is obligatory upon all adult Muslims, there are exceptions and among those who may also be excused from fasting are:

- The Sick
- Elderly Muslims who find it very difficult to fast, or for whom it may be dangerous health-wise
- Pregnant women (under certain conditions)
- Breast-feeding women (under certain conditions)
- Menstruating women
- A Muslim who is traveling more than 45 miles away from his/her place of residence

Once the sun has set, Muslims are allowed to eat and drink again as normal. Although it is custom in many countries that the evening meal for breaking the fast, known as (Iftar), be a lavish affair, the Iftar meal should not resemble a banquet, since the Month of Ramadhan and the act of fasting is about abstention from eating and drinking, for physical and spiritual reasons. The breaking of the fast therefore, is not an excuse to eat excessively.

The breakfast meal, eaten before fasting starts again before the sun begins to rise the next morning is known as 'Suhur'. Again this should be eaten in moderation.

At the end of month of Ramadhan, Muslims celebrate the festival of Eid al-Fitr. They attend special morning prayers, then celebrate with food and often gifts.

Muslims are reminded that the lessons learned from this holy month should not be forgotten;

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they should not indulge in food and waste it simply because they have the opportunity to eat during daylight hours again.