

A Guide to Healthy Fasting



Fasting is primarily an act of willing abstinence or reduction from certain or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time (Wikipedia). While some people fast for dieting purpose, the majority observe this rule as a heightened consciousness of God and spirituality. One example is during the month of Ramadhan, whereby Muslims all over the world will observe this period of time as a “fasting month”, in accordance to one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

There are however, certain exemptions from fasting, which include children under the age of puberty and sick patients. Although the Quran did not specify the kind of sickness nor describe the sickness which exempts a person from fasting during Ramadhan, it is generally accepted that this applies to those who are severely affected by fasting. When in doubt, Muslims generally refer to “fatwa”, but it is important for a physician to provide more information and describe the nature of intervention during the fasting month, in order for patients to understand their conditions better, hence they are in a better position to make a decision whether to proceed with their treatment. Other groups that are exempted from fasting during this period include travellers, menstruating women, pregnant and lactating women.

Treatment with medications may pose some confusion among patients and physicians – whether some medications nullify fasting or if the frequency of intake (BD, TDS or QID) could be better managed to avoid being nullified from fasting.

To settle the differences between what medications can and cannot be used during the fasting month, a religious-medical symposium was held in Morocco in 1997: “The Islamic view of certain contemporary medical issues”, whereby distinguished Muslim jurists and religion experts, medical practitioners, pharmacologists, and specialists in other human sciences, agreed unanimously that the following administration routes do not nullify fasting:



- Eye and ear drops
- All substances absorbed into the body through the skin, such as creams, ointments, patches and medicated plasters
- Insertion into the vagina of pessaries, medical ovules, and vaginal washes
- Injections through the skin, muscle, joints, or veins, with the exception of intravenous feeding
- Oxygen and anesthetic gases
- Nitroglycerin tablets placed under the tongue for the treatment of angina
- Mouthwash, gargle, or oral spray, provided nothing is swallowed into the stomach

While a majority of participants added the following:

- Nose drops, nose sprays, and inhalers
- Anal enemas
- Surgeries requiring general anesthesia, if the patient decided to fast and there is no health risks as determined by qualified physicians

Another concern regarding the frequency of intake could be managed as follows (Table 1), depending on whether the intake should be “before food” or “after food”:

Frequency

Time to Consume

Before Food

After Food

Once Daily (OD)

Half an hour before morning meal (Sahur)

After breaking fast

Twice Daily (BD)

i) Half an hour before morning meal (Sahur)
ii) After breaking fast (Maghrib), half an hour before taking meal

i) After morning meal
ii) After breaking fast

Three Times Daily (TDS)

i) Half an hour before morning meal (Sahur)
ii) After breaking fast (Maghrib), half an hour before taking meal
iii) Before bedtime

i) After morning meal
ii) After breaking fast
iii) Before bedtime

Four Times Daily (QID)

Depending on the type of disease or ask for alternative advice if you want to fast (eg, drug rescheduling)

Another method, "drug rescheduling" could also be employed to reduce the frequency of intake to one to two divided doses within a day. Below are some examples of drugs that could be rescheduled in accordance to the Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia (Table 2):

Table 2. Drug Rescheduling (Update 2013 Drug Therapy during Holy Month of Ramadan)



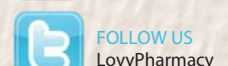
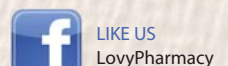
Drug Therapy During Regular Days	Drug Therapy During Ramadhan	Alteration
Captopril 12.5-150mg in 2-3 divided doses	-Enalapril 2.5-40mg in 1-2 divided doses -Perindopril 4-840mg in 1-2 divided doses -Ramipril 1.25-2040mg in 1-2 divided doses	Change medication but under the same group (ACEI)
Diltiazem 60-360mg divided into 3 doses	-Diltiazem SR 120-360mg in 1-2 divided doses	Change to long acting drug
Erythromycin 250-500mg QID	-Clarithromycin 250-500mg BD -Azithromycin 500mg OD	Change to other antibiotic but under same group

For other drug rescheduling, please refer to the original article:
<http://www.moh.gov.sa/depts/Pharmacy/Documents/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%84.pdf>



This article is brought to you by Lovy Pharmacy.

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