

Ramadan Fact Sheet

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is also the holiest, for good reason. Muslims believe it is when their sacred scripture, the Quran, was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him - PBUH). Approximately **1.8 billion Muslims** around the world observe this rite annually through intense spiritual revival, self-discipline, and festivities. For some Muslims, it's a reminder to *"reconnect with God and embrace my beautiful faith"*, and others see it as *"a time for social connection; a peaceful month."*

During Ramadan, it is obligatory to both **fast and perform acts of charity**. Paying zakat al-fitr is a requirement for fasting Muslims during Ramadan; the amount payable is equal to one day's meal for one person.



From the sighting of the new moon, Muslims practice fasting and abstinence for **30 days**. Between dawn and dusk, no food or drink – including water – is consumed, and intimate relations pause.

"When I fast, it's a way of putting aside my needs and feelings of hunger and fulfillment, and concentrating on other things like body, mind, soul, and faith."

While these activities are very personal and individual, they are also a powerful symbol of unity. Knowing there are many Muslims around the world fasting at the same time creates an inspiring sense of solidarity and camaraderie.

Although all Muslims are required to take part in this tradition, there are **special exemptions** for those who are ill, pregnant or nursing, travelling, and for children and the elderly.

How does Ramadan help a Muslim to become a better person?

Just like the fasting and abstinence traditions we see in other religions – Ekadasi (Hindu), Yom Kippur (Judaism), and Lent (Christianity) – Ramadan helps to unburden Muslims from daily compulsions, and draw them closer to God and their conscience.

"I think the main thing, for me, is reinforcing empathy, given that an important part of fasting is understanding what those who are less fortunate go through."

Despite the restrictions of Ramadan, it is an occasion eagerly anticipated by many Muslims. This is because it is an opportunity to experience an enriching, month-long spiritual journey which provides valuable lessons about **life, endurance, spirituality, and morality**.

The long period of fasting and abstinence followed by nightly prayers teaches **patience, self-restraint and discipline**. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said it best: "There are people who fast and get nothing from their fast except hunger" (Ibn Majah, 1690). It's a reminder of the importance of upholding a morally good character and reforming bad habits.

What does a typical day during Ramadan look like?

Morning twilight. A time that signals the **suhur**; a family meal shared **before dawn**. It's the last opportunity to eat and drink before fasting begins.

"I wake up an hour-and-a-half before prayer so that I can take my time with my suhur and allow my food to digest. I try to fit in as many food groups and superfoods as I can. Recently, I had a Turkish bread sandwich with chorizo, beetroot, egg, spinach, tomato and avocado, as well as coffee and copious amounts of water."



After this, the day proceeds as usual. This includes work, school, or other routine duties. Australian Muslims are often found going about their daily business and earning their livelihood.

The thirst and hunger pains are relieved at sunset with **iftar**; a joyful, communal **breaking of the fast**.

"My family and I break our fast with dates. Then, we drink khoshaf (juice); a homemade compote of dried apricots, figs, plums, dates and blanched almonds."



After breaking the day's fast, **Muslims will pray** the maghrib (sunset) prayer, and then return for a full dinner with family and friends. Special evening prayers called tarawih are later performed at mosques.



How can non-Muslims be an ally to Muslims during Ramadan?

Sharing this brochure with employers, colleagues, teachers and friends will help them understand the **significance of Ramadan**, its physical demands, and its time-based obligations.

It is also very important that Muslims are given time to attend Eid al-Fitr prayers at the end of Ramadan. Eid al-Fitr is as important to Muslims as Christmas and Yom Kippur are to Christians and Jews respectively.

What is Eid al-Fitr?

This is a massive celebration which marks the end of Ramadan. Muslims attend Eid prayers in the morning, visit friends and family, enjoy festive meals, and give gifts to loved ones.