

Medication Management During Ramadan



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The religious requirement of fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadan is of an extraordinary spiritual value to the Muslim community. Many studies conducted in the past decade have found that due to the spiritual motivation, habit change and focus on the moment, fasting in healthy volunteers showed improved vigilance, energy levels, mood and reduced depressive and anxiety symptoms. However, there are some important considerations for when initiating or revising any medical treatment, and especially for a mental health condition.

Who is exempt from fasting, and why?

Exceptions are made for several groups of individuals, including children, women who are menstruating or pregnant or breastfeeding, and those whose conditions could be worsened by fasting. This includes those who are traveling (with the current COVID-19 situation, this will not be commonplace), the elderly and more fragile, and individuals who are chronically ill with physical or mental illness. Muslims with such conditions are recommended to consult both a medical professional and a religious scholar, to evaluate the severity of the condition and advice on the possibility of the exacerbation of their conditions due to the fasting.

The link between fasting, sleep and mood disorders

For most, Ramadan fasting disrupts typical eating and sleeping patterns. While people typically return to sleep after the Suhoor meal, their sleep is usually characterized by a reduced rapid-eye-movement sleep. Changes to one's circadian rhythm can provoke the onset of (or, more frequently), a relapse of affective (mood) disorders.

How to stay on course with your prescribed medication treatment during Ramadan

Taking oral formulations of a drug during the Holy Month of Ramadan can contradict a fast. Some patients can have difficulties sustaining their dosage regimen, as a result of skipping doses during fasting. It is wise to consult with your psychiatrist, as your psychiatrist can decide to switch the patient to different strategies during the Holy Month. This could mean a switch to the use of long acting formulations, or twice daily dosing regimens for drugs given multiple times per day during other months. It has been shown by research that during Ramadan, patients often have better medication adherence to their treatments compared to other months.

The importance of medication assessment by your psychiatrist during Ramadan

Given the substantial change in eating and sleeping patterns, patients on a treatment plan with chronic medications are encouraged to meet with their psychiatrist and be assessed more frequently to verify that the different timing and dosing of the medication is showing the same effectiveness.

All psychiatry appointments are currently offered online. To make an appointment or if you are experiencing an emergency, please contact us on T. (0)4 380 2088 from Saturday – Thursday, 8am – 8pm. Outside working hours, if the nature of the emergency is so severe that you may find yourself being at high risk you should be admitted to Al Amal hospital.

“Patients with chronic medications can be assessed more frequently during Ramadan to ensure medication effectiveness of timing and dosing.”



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