



RAMADAN 2023 GUIDANCE – FOR MANAGERS AND STAFF

This month is the ninth month of the Muslim Calendar, the month of Ramadan (22 March 2023 – 21 April 2023), the period of fasting and reflection by Muslims. As well as being one of the focal points of the Muslim year.

During **Ramadan**, Muslims fast and do extra prayers, over and above their obligatory five prayers a day, to become closer to God. It is also a time for families and communities to gather and celebrate together.

Fasting has always been an important and often necessary part of religious life, discipline and experience across all faiths. Many of the key fasting considerations highlighted in this document transfers to all primary faiths and practices including Christianity and the sacrifices of 'Lent'; Judaism and fasting during Yom Kippur and Tish'ah B'av. Religion and belief is a main protected characteristic of diversity, and festivals like Eid, as well as Easter, Yom Kippur, Vaisakhi and Diwali, and the other religious days and periods give us an opportunity not just to support those who observe them, but also to learn and understand more about the people we work with and serve.

The Muslim holy month of Ramadan starts on Wednesday 22 March 23 and lasts either 29 or 30 days ending on Friday 21 April 23. During this time many Muslims will consider it an obligatory duty to fast from dawn to dusk. It is a total fast, with complete abstinence from food and drink.

There are some people who are exempt from fasting, these include:

- pregnant and menstruating women,
- lactating women who have concerns about their own or their child's health,
- children,
- the elderly and infirm,

As well as those who are generally ill with underlying conditions and persons travelling long distances. However, in many cases, exempted persons and other people who may be vulnerable such as diabetics and the elderly will want to fast. It is a very special time where every Muslim will want to take, and be part of this time of reflection and consideration.

Eid ul- Fitr marks the end of Ramadan. A celebration day will take place on either Saturday 22 April or Sunday 23 April 23 depending on the sighting of the new moon.

Communications & the patient's perspective

For NWAS health care professionals, it is important that we use good communication with different and diverse patient groups, these would include tools such as Language Line (also being made available in audio and video, inclusive of BSL, to NWAS clinicians at patient side), Multi Lingual Emergency Phrasebook, PES and PTS Pictorial Communication Handbook's, the Community Calendar 2023 are identified as best practice.

All managers and staff should be made aware of the importance and the impact of Ramadan on our work colleagues as well as our patients and the wider Muslim community, during this period.

Being equipped with the necessary information in relation to Ramadan not only supports the users of our services in respect to patient choice but also assists NWAS' clinical staff to have an additional

communication aid when providing medical interventions, care, advice and respect to Muslim patients. When approaching the issue with Muslim patients, it is important for healthcare professionals to maybe provide an acknowledgement to the fast for example:

- “I understand that it is Ramadan, are you fasting at the moment?
- How is Ramadan for you?
- I would like to be able to... I believe this may/may not break your fast (where applicable)... are you comfortable with this”.

Where Muslim patients refuse treatment, even though it may not break the fast, the patient’s choice should be respected, and advice should be offered on medical grounds.

FASTING MAY HAVE AN IMPACT ON PATIENT ASSESSMENTS –

The fast will break when:

1. Eating or drinking intentionally
2. Taking oral medication
3. Providing nourishing medication i.e., it substitutes eating and drinking, (also by intramuscular or intravenous injections)
4. Smoking

Typical NWS clinical interventions that would break the fast include (the list is not exhaustive):

- Using Aspirin, Paracetamol or Ibuprofen
- Glucose drinks

The fast will not break when:

1. Administering injections (intravenous, intramuscular and subcutaneous)
2. Taking bloods (thumb pricks or intravenous)
3. Using puffers and inhalers or eye and ear drops
4. Eating or drinking unintentionally
5. Covid -19 or flu vaccines
6. Lateral flow tests will not nullify the fast.

Typical NWS clinical interventions that will not break the fast include (the list is not exhaustive):

- GTN (Glyceryl Trinitrate)
- Treating wounds
- Rectal Diazepam
- Nebulisers and Oxygen
- Salbutamol nebulisation
- Saline infusion (IV)
- Morphine (IV)
- Diazepam
- Adrenaline
- Benzyl penicillin

Further considerations for managers

Managers need to be aware that Ramadan is about ‘being part of’ and could lead to placing a different demand on Trust PES services, in areas of the North West particularly where there are high density ethnic minority Muslim populations such as in Manchester and Bolton, the popular towns of East Lancashire, Preston and the Muslim Somali/ Arabic populations of Merseyside and Cheshire. At the

time of updating this guidance March 2023 and complete easing of any Covid-19 restrictions, the additional prayers at night at mosques will be taking place as normal with many of them completely packed full of worshippers from all age groups. This could, in some instances, also potentially impact on Ambulance vehicle access where there are some of the narrower streets for parking.

Managers will also need to consider the impact of Ramadan on staffing and ways to accommodate Muslim staff during this period. "Hybrid working" is becoming common within NWAS and many Muslim staff based in corporate services are likely to experience Ramadan while working in the office and working from home. Consideration should be given to allowing prayer breaks at different times of day to support Muslim staff.

Other considerations Managers should take into account will be to:

- Consider / sensitively any requests for annual leave or shift swaps for Eid ul Fitr on Saturday 22 April and Sunday 23 April 2023,
- Consider flexible working or changing shift rotas to accommodate breaking the fast at the end of each day where this is possible
- Consider allowing extra time to pray, especially at sunset
- Allowing meal breaks at different times, for example lunch break at dusk approx. 6.30pm initially to coincide with breaking the fast.
- Avoid organising any events during this time if Muslim staff are to be invited to the events.

However, all requests based on religious identity and practice, should be considered and balanced against operational need. As a supportive employer and proactive service provider North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust recognises, it is good practice to accommodate these requests wherever possible. Accommodating religious belief and practices, does not mean allowing extra time off – it is about being flexible about employees' existing holiday entitlement, working patterns or break periods.

Further information

If any staff or managers want to know more about Ramadan or anything else, please contact Communications@nwas.nhs.uk

The NHS Constitution and NHS modernisation agendas are in agreement: 'The NHS of the 21st century must reflect the diverse needs of patients, carer's and communities in both services and employment practices and treat everyone, patients and staff with dignity, kindness and respect'.

Further guidance on the impact of Ramadan fasting and patient health inequalities with diabetes is available at [Diabetes and Ramadan | Fasting | Diabetes UK](#).

Further information and guidance on Ramadan 2023 has been made available nationally via the [Ramadan and Eid Guidance 2023 – NHS Muslim Network](#) and [MFE Ramadan For Employers.pdf](#)

A special acknowledgment is provided to Nicholas Sutcliffe, NWAS Consultant Paramedic for the significant support and contribution with detailing the clinical interventions considered historically and in this NWAS Ramadan 23 guidance document.

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