

Ramadan Q&As for vaccination workforce and 119 operators

At a glance – Ramadan

Fasting plays an important role in many major religions and is a central feature in all the Abrahamic faiths. In Islam, adult Muslims, who are able to, are required to fast during the month of Ramadan.

Fasting has been ordained to improve mindfulness of Allah (God) in Muslims' day-to-day lives. For this reason, Ramadan is a time of prayer and self-reflection, where Muslims are encouraged to read the Qur'an, increase in their charitable giving and in worship. These acts engender a sense of gratitude, self-discipline and restraint, which should continue throughout the year.

Like last year, Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr will take place during the COVID-19 pandemic, this guidance includes specific advice to address the implications of this for the NHS.

When is Ramadan?

The Islamic calendar is calculated according to the lunar cycles, so the month of Ramadan begins when the new moon is sighted. As a result, the start and finish times change from year to year, usually advancing 10 days earlier every year. Ramadan lasts for 29-30 days and ends with the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr. This year Ramadan is due to start on Monday 12 or Tuesday 13 April, depending on the sighting of the new moon; Eid-ul-Fitr is likely to be on Wednesday 12 or Thursday 13 May.

What do Muslims do during Ramadan?

The basic requirement is for all Muslims to fast from dawn to sunset daily. Fasting, in Islam, is the act of complete abstinence from food, drink, smoking and intimate sexual relations during this part of the day. Bad behaviour such as lying, deceiving, swearing or insulting others also detracts from the reward of the one who is fasting. The fast is broken at sunset with a meal called iftar. Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), most Muslims will first drink water or eat dates and then have a normal meal.

In addition to fasting, Muslims will also spend most of their evenings in a special supererogatory prayer called taraweeh, which is usually performed in congregation at a mosque.

With the limitations on the maximum capacity of mosques and limited congregation numbers nationally due to COVID-19, these may be performed individually at home or in the workplace. The prayer can take anywhere between one to three hours.

Can I have a COVID-19 vaccine while fasting?

The British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA) have issued specific advice urging Muslims observing Ramadan not to delay getting the vaccine, drawing on analysis from Islamic scholars which says that injections for non-nutritional purposes do not invalidate the fast

More information is available at: <https://britishima.org/operation-vaccination/hub/statements/#FAST>

Does the vaccine cause side effects which will cause me to break my fast?

The vaccine is known to cause short term and reversible side effect. These include having a sore arm, feeling nauseous and generally tired. It is unlikely that these side effects could result in someone breaking their fast, however if someone felt unwell it may be necessary. One consideration could include booking your vaccine closer to the time of breaking your fast to minimise the chance of this.

If I choose not to take the vaccine can I re-arrange it for after Ramadan?

The COVID-19 vaccination offer is an evergreen one which means that once you have been offered a vaccine, that offer remains open. However, it is important to be aware the vaccine minimises the risk of developing COVID-19 and transmitting it to all those you come in contact with. The COVID-19 vaccine is our best form of protection for you, your family and community, so we would not recommend delaying it.

Does the vaccine contain alcohol?

The Oxford/AstraZenaca vaccine contains ethanol in trace amounts, no more than what is found in natural foods such as a banana or a slice bread. Based on this information, scholars have been clear that this is permissible.

Does the vaccine contain any meat ingredients?

There is no material of foetal or animal origin in either vaccine