

# Ramadan Health Guide

Healthy Hacks  
for an Awesome Ramadan



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**“ ..O Allah! Do not condemn us if we forget or fall into error...”**

(Al-Quran 2:286)

# Introduction

A Muslim's life is beautiful, simple and complete with Allah's infinite Blessings. As part of His Blessings, there are some things in our lives that are better than others.

The Prophets are the Best of Creation; Friday is the best day of the week and Makkah is the best place any human could hope to visit and experience being a Muslim.

Just like all these aspects that make up Islam, Allah *subhanawuta'ala* has made Ramadan the best month of the whole year. Ramadan happens once a year, but of course, you already know that. It is because of this realisation that we strive to make every Ramadan our best yet. Being passionate about doing our best in Ramadan is important to us Muslims in order to protect ourselves from the Eternal Fire.

In Ramadan, we strive to attain forgiveness, a purified heart and a greater awareness of Islam. Ramadan is prime time to seek all these things. Allah is making it easy for us to attain our personal goals by chaining up the *shayateen* and grant us a temptation-free playing field to become better Muslims.

In Ramadan, we also strive for something more universal and central to Islam: *Taqwa* (God consciousness). Allah has designated Ramadan solely for this reason, as He says:

*"O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed upon those before you in order that you may attain taqwa." (Al-Quran 2:183)*

So to attain both these goals - forgiveness and *taqwa* (God consciousness) we need to maximise our efforts during the blessed month of Ramadan and make the best out of it.

I know what you are thinking – and I agree. Making the best out of Ramadan is certainly easier said than done. Our level of existing spirituality, the food we eat, our sleep routine and even the amount of exercise we do, all play their respective and important roles in helping us to attain this goal.

So, it is important that we plan and prepare for Ramadan if we are set on making the best out of it.

A little disclaimer before we start ☺ :

I am not your spiritual coach, so I am going to allow the scholars to play their part in this respect. I am, however, your nutrition and exercise coach. So, this Ramadan, I want to give you the ultimate nutrition, exercise, sleep and energy management techniques to help you make this Ramadan your best ever, physically and mentally.

This e-book is your practical nutrition and exercise guide for Ramadan. I hope this e-book will serve as a reminder of the priorities of Ramadan so that you can make positive food choices, *insha Allah*.

I sincerely pray, Allah *subuhanawuta'ala*, enables you and me to fast the entire Month of Ramadan; that this Ramadan turns out to be our best one yet and that this Ramadan is a means for us to enter the best of Paradise, *Jannath ul-Firdaws al-A'la*. Also, that Allah accepts and rewards our good deeds abundantly and that He turns all our sins to good deeds. *Ameen!*

Your brother in Islam

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P.S.: This e-book is initially written for our premium-coaching clients. The special instructions in the green box are meant for them and may not apply to everyone.

# Chapter 1: Planning and Preparation

I am sure you have heard of the saying:

***“Failing to plan is planning to fail.”***

I do not know who the genius behind this quotation was, but it certainly contains the only and ultimate truth about planning.

We all have good intentions to make this coming Ramadan our best one yet, but we will fail miserably (harsh, I know, but it is the truth ☺), if we don't plan our route to success.

The absence of planning ends up contributing to many of our failures and sufferings. That is why, as Muslims, it is in our best interest to make planning a centre of everything we do in life.

## Planning for Success

Our bodies and minds gratefully receive Ramadan as a welcome change. Fasting, however, is not an easy task. It places much strain on us, both physically and mentally. During Ramadan, we push ourselves to the limit and strive to do more worship in Ramadan on less sleep, food and water.

We strive this much because our universal goal in Ramadan is to achieve *taqwa* by coming closer to Allah *subuhanawuta'ala*. To successfully achieve this goal, we certainly need a clear plan and action list. Otherwise our chances of achieving this important goal become slimmer.

We know from the life of our Beloved Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions how diligently they prepared to welcome Ramadan. The Prophet (PBUH) would fast most of the days in the month of Sha'bān, the month before Ramadan in the lunar calendar.

Aisha (RA) reported *"I never saw the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) fasting a complete month, except the month of Ramadan, and I have never seen him fasting in a month more frequently than he did in Sha'ban."* (Sahih Bukhary)

The Companions emulated the Prophet and went to great lengths to prepare for Ramadan by asking Allah *subhanawuta'ala* six months prior to Ramadan to grant them a long life in order to reach Ramadan.

Looking at these examples, it's clear that we need to walk in the footsteps of our Messenger and his Companions if we want to be successful in Ramadan.

These are the four key areas I personally focus on planning and preparing for the month of Ramadan so that I can benefit most from the month:

1. Goal setting
2. Du'a list
3. Schedule
4. Meal preparation

## Goal Setting

***"People with goals succeed because they know where they're going."*** - Earl Nightingale

If you want to make this Ramadan the best you have ever had, you need to define what this “best” means to you. What goals do you want to achieve this Ramadan, in order to make this Ramadan the best in your life?

I see Ramadan as the best month to achieve some new goals in my life. Since the *shayateen* are shackled and imprisoned in Ramadan, we are far less influenced by their whisperings. Of course being free from influences makes it easier for us to achieve these goals that bring us closer to Allah.

So every Sha'ban I convene with my family to set these goals. These are some of the simple guidelines I follow when setting goals for Ramadan:

- **Simple and achievable goals.** For example: praying *Taraweeh* every night, understanding a part of the Quran, being regular with *sunnah* prayers, etc.
- **Set a maximum of five goals.** I usually set five goals. If you are new to goal setting, I would suggest you keep it to three.
- **Set a clear timeline and action points.** Your goals shouldn't be vague or hazy. For each goal, you should have a clear timeline and action points. For example, if one of your goals is to memorise some Qur'an, then make sure to write down when and where you are going to do it.

And commit this in writing, such as:

- > From 4.30am - 5.00am: Memorisation in the masjid
- > From 10:30pm - 11:00pm: Revision at home

This level of detailed planning will prevent you from procrastinating, *bi'idnillah*.

- **Track the goals.** I track my Ramadan goals in a simple chart (alternatively you can use an app such as "[Way of Life](#)"). I include a big financial penalty for every day I miss a goal. This penalty helps – a lot! 😊.

Goals in Ramadan	Goal 1:					Penalty
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

See Appendix 1 to print this chart.

- **Create accountability.** It's also advisable to have someone who can hold you accountable, such as your spouse or siblings. This person's main role is to assist you to complete your goal without failing.

If you don't have anyone around you, find someone who can be reached on the phone every day at a certain time. The thought that you need to call and inform the person, "I've failed to achieve my goal today" will certainly prevent you from missing your set goals.

## Du'a List

There is no better month than Ramadan for making some heartfelt and much-needed *du'as*. **The absolute prime times for making *du'a* are at the time of *suḥoor* and *iftār*.**

Abu Huraira said the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah said: "*The supplications of three groups of people are not rejected; the du'a (supplication) of the fasting person when he is breaking his fast, the du'a of the just Imam and the du'a of the oppressed.*" (Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ibn Hibbaan)

What I do is, I write a small list of things I need in this world and in the *Ākihra*. I usually limit the list to just ten and re-write them in a *du'a* format.

I carry this list with me wherever I go and utilise it when I raise my hands to Allah. **It means I ask the same *du'a* over and over again, in the hope that Allah would accept it at a time He has promised to.** Over the last couple of years, this has really helped me immensely! You too will be amazed, *insha Allah*, at the results, you will get. Try it out.

These are the three greatest benefits of creating a *du'a* list:

1. **A *du'a* list helps you to be focused when asking *du'a*.** Since you are reading it from a list, there are fewer chances that your mind will wander.
2. **A *du'a* list helps you to remember your *dua's*.** In the Ramadan tiredness, we often forget to ask Allah what we really want. Having a written list of *du'as* will help you to remember.

3. **Repeating *du'as* inspire you to do action.** Asking Allah, the same *du'a* again and again also means that you are really passionate about getting these *du'as* answered. The more passionate you are about something, the more you'll do to achieve it. So ultimately your repeated *du'as* will inspire you to act, *bi'idnillah*.

### Schedule Important Events

In order to get things done, I create a rough timetable of my typical day in Ramadan. These are some of the important times blocked out in my timetable:

- My sleeping time
- My napping time
- My working time
- My worshipping time
- My exercise time
- My family time

Once these times are scheduled, I write them on a piece of paper and stick it somewhere where I frequently see. This simple technique paves the way to getting things done and to increase my productivity in the month of Ramadan.

When scheduling your time, make sure that these timings are practical for you and your family members.

### Meal Preparation

Frankly speaking, Ramadan should be a month where you spend less money on food and less time in the kitchen.

In order to achieve this goal, you could prepare most of your meals in advance. This preparation could save you much time, money and stress.

In fact, I talk quite extensively about meal preparation in my coaching programme, as it's an important factor for eating healthily, not just in Ramadan, but also in other months.

When I talk about meal preparation for Ramadan, I don't mean to ask you to cook your meals for the whole month of Ramadan. It's more about preparing things that would otherwise take away precious time in the blessed month.

These are some of the things you could do to minimise your shopping and cooking time in Ramadan:

- **Do bulk shopping for the entire month.** Create a list of foods and distinguish between foods you can buy in bulk and food that can be bought only weekly. If you have a large freezer, you can also stock meat and fish that you need for the entire month.
  
- **Find kitchen chores that are more time consuming** and try to find a way to do them in a batch. Some of the things I do:
  - Wash, cut and marinate meat and fish in batch. I portion it and freeze them for an entire month.

- Wash, dry and prepare some vegetables to make a quick salad or soup. I also use plenty of frozen organic vegetables in Ramadan. This saves me a lot of washing and cutting time.
- Prepare smoothie/power shake ingredients and portion them to freeze.

## The Medical Benefits of Fasting

I would like to end this first chapter by giving you the low down on the medical benefits of fasting. Don't worry – it won't put you to sleep reading it.

But before I begin, I just want to make clear that we obviously don't fast just for the sake of medical benefits. Instead, we fast in order to obey Allah's command and to please Him alone. Having said that, knowing some of the medical benefits will most definitely boost our *imān* as it will affirm the universal truth that obeying Allah and our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) most definitely brings us success in both the Worlds.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan, *insha Allah*, can:

- **lower the systolic blood pressure and blood lipids** (decreased triglycerides and LDL, aka "bad cholesterol") – this is super good for the heart
- **lower blood sugar and increase insulin sensitivity** – good news for those pre-diabetics
- **lower markers of inflammation** – many diseases have been linked to prolonged inflammation
- **reduce the risk of many types of cancer**
- **increase the activity of cellular repair**

- **kick off the detoxification process in your body** - this happens when toxins stored in your body's fat is dissolved and removed.
- **improve appetite control**
- **improve the overall cardiovascular functions**
- **increase your lifespan** – various studies on lab animals have shown that restriction of caloric intake increases longevity, slows the rate of functional decline, and reduces incidence of age-related disease in a variety of species
- **increase your mental alertness and improve your focus**
- **help your body heal itself** – our body is always trying to heal itself and fasting helps immensely to facilitate this process.
- **accelerate the fat-burning mechanism** – now is that not awesome for losing weight?

And the million-dollar question:

If fasting brings so many implicit medical benefits, why is it that many Muslims do not experience these improvements to their health?

In fact, there is considerable evidence based on statistics from many Muslim countries to suggest that a significant number of Muslims experience certain health issues during Ramadan.

The main cause for this contradiction is the poor food choices people make during Ramadan, both in the quantity and quality of food consumed. **The restraint they religiously show during the fasting period is not maintained during the non-fasting hours.** And sadly, this greatly diminishes the spirit of fasting altogether.

So, if you really want to enjoy all the amazing medical and spiritual benefits of Ramadan, then it's important to pay attention to the choice of your food during those non-fasting hours.

To sum up, fasting in the month of Ramadan is an excellent opportunity to improve your overall health and to lose some weight. However, this can only be achieved, if you eat a suitable and balanced diet, or else you'll end up worsening your health.

Come with me to the next chapter to delve into making healthy nutrition choices during Ramadan.

## Chapter 2: Nutrition in Ramadan

Managing your nutrition and sleep proactively during Ramadan will actually help you in maintaining your energy levels and mental focus throughout the day and into the night as well.

Particularly the food you eat at *suḥoor* and *iftār* directly affects your productivity, *'ibādah*, focus and energy levels during the day and night of this blessed month.

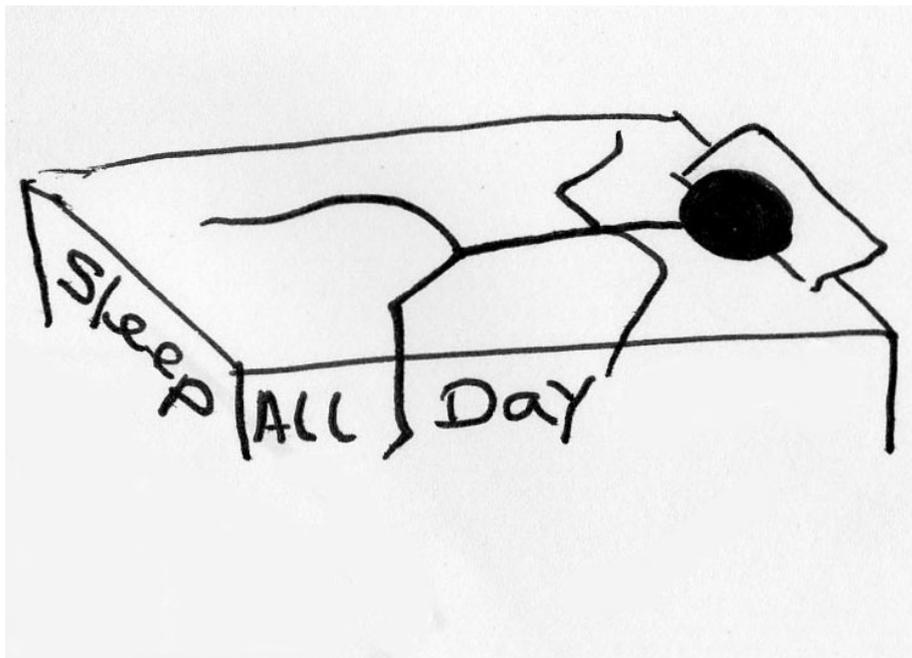
So it's important to eat foods high in nutrients during Ramadan in order to reenergise your body and mind to fast yet another day. Revitalising your body and mind is vital to perform high quality *'ibādah* every day of Ramadan.

We are faced with irritability, anger, hunger pangs and mood swings when we fail to reenergise our body and mind. Hence, proper nutrition plays an immense role in revitalising and preparing our body for the next day of fasting.

I'm sure you don't want to look like this person after iftār:



Or even this person during the day:



Your goals in Ramadan are not about cramming as much sleep as possible during the day and then eating to your heart's content at *iftār*.

Instead, you have mapped out a plan with high aspirations for your mind, body and soul to make this the best Ramadan you have ever had, *insha Allah*.

## The Purpose of Your Ramadan Meals

Have you ever thought of this: What is the purpose of your *iftār* and *suhoor*?

I guess you want your *iftār* and *suhoor* to assist you achieving your goals. This means the food you eat has an important purpose, i.e. to reenergise your body and mind to achieve your high aspirations in this blessed month. So the purpose of your meals is certainly not just to fill up your empty stomach.

**So, if what you put in your mouth neither reenergises your body nor helps you achieve your goals – don't eat it. Simple.**

While Ramadan is a **God-sent opportunity to improve your health and lose some body fat**, it's also a month when many people fall sick due to an improper diet.

But with the right food choices, you can achieve your goals, improve your health and also lose some of your unwanted fat. That's killing three birds with one stone, and isn't that cool?

Now, let's see what foods provide you with this advantage and what foods don't.

## Foods That Aren't Good for You

If you are serious about achieving your goals and getting Lean & Healthy during Ramadan, there are few items that you should try to avoid eating. These foods are bad for you all the time, but in Ramadan, their effect on your health is far more hazardous. So please keep these foods at bay:

- **Deep fried food** – These foods tend to have unhealthier fats and unwanted calories. A large baked potato contains around 220 calories and 1g fat whereas the same potato turned into French fries has a whopping 710 calories and 34 g fat! Additionally, deep fried food can cause irritable bowel syndrome, heartburn and other discomforts. Especially after a long day of fasting, deep fried food could harm your body more.
- **“White” foods** (i.e., white bread, white rice, white sugar, etc.) - These white foods are full of “empty” calories; they are highly processed and stripped of the nutrients your body needs. Don't waste your time eating empty calories – eat the good stuff in the few hours you have.
- **Sweets, desserts and sugary drinks** – You are adding unwanted calories and the sugars present in these foods trigger more hunger. And the last thing you want is to feel hungrier when fasting, right?
- **Too oily and too spicy foods** - These foods aggravate heartburn and increase your thirst.

During Ramadan, some things must be reduced, if you can't fully avoid them:

- **Strong black tea**
- **Coffee**
- **Caffeinated drinks** (Coca-Cola and Co.)

The caffeine in these beverages is a diuretic – this stimulates faster water loss, which leads to dehydration. Ideally, you should just avoid such beverages during Ramadan and take up every opportunity to drink water.

If you really can't live without your dose of caffeine, then stick to one cup of black coffee/tea just before *Taraweeh* prayers (however, this may disrupt your sleep). And don't go near this stuff at *suhoor*.

## Foods That Are Great for You

Now, let's have a closer look at what foods are ideal for you at *iftar* and *suhoor*.

### Iftār

*The fasting person experiences two (occasions) of delight: at the time of iftār and at the time he will meet his Rabb. (Sahih Bukhary)*

As the hadith points out, *iftār* is an incredibly delightful time for a Muslim. After a long day of fasting, we are at last allowed to eat and drink again. It's not wise to stuff as much food as possible as soon as the call for *Maghreb* goes. Although you have not eaten for the whole day, take it slow and easy. The food will not run away from you – promise 😊.

I hope this following hadith will help us understand the importance of eating less, in Ramadan and outside of Ramadan:

***"Nothing is worse than a person who fills his stomach. It should be enough for the son of Adam to have a few bites to satisfy his hunger. If he wishes more, it should be: One-third for his food, one-third for his liquids, and one-third for his breath."*** (Tirmidhi & Ibn Majah)

Think of *iftār* as a transition time from fasting to eating. So this means your stomach needs a gentle message that it's going to get some nutritious food. This gentle message is best sent when you break your fast with fresh dates (if not available, get some dried dates) and water.

Anas Ibn Maalik said: *"The Prophet (PBUH) used to break his fast with fresh dates before he prayed. If he did not find fresh dates, then he would use dried dates. If he did not find that, also he drank a few sips of water."* (Ahmad and Abu Dawood)

After this, go and pray your *Maghreb salah*. These 15-20 minutes prepares your stomach naturally for your first meal after long hours of fasting.

By the time you finish your *salah* and return back to your dining table, you won't be feeling ravenously hungry and thus, you can eat your food slowly until you are 80% full. And slowly eating helps you to eat less and taste the food better.

The above routine is healthier for your body and it also gets rid of the spot of tiredness you may feel after *iftār*.

Keep your *iftar* meal as simple as possible. You'll be rewarded for having followed the *sunnah* and the light meal will not only help you to reenergise but also to feel light and awake during your *taraweeh* prayers.

To maximise the nutrients you get from your meal, I suggest you include foods from all these four categories.

	Example	Amount	Remarks
<b>Protein</b>	Fish, Beef, Chicken, Lamb, Turkey	<b>Men:</b> 2 servings <b>Women:</b> 1 serving	1 serving equals the size of your palm
<b>Vegetables</b>	Eat from both green leafy vegetables and colourful vegetables	<b>Cooked:</b> 2 cups OR <b>Raw:</b> 3-4 cups	
<b>Complex (aka super) carbs</b>	Lentils, Legumes, Red Rice, Quinoa, Oats, Potatoes	1/2 cup	
<b>Healthy Fats</b>	Avocado, walnut, olive oil, coconut, cashew nut	<b>Men:</b> 2 servings <b>Women:</b> 1 serving	1 serving equals the size of your thumb

**Vegetables:** Include as many servings of vegetables as you can in your meal. Vegetables are full of essential nutrients and phytochemicals. Due to the high content of fibre, they also prevent you from getting constipation in Ramadan.

As for protein and fat serving sizes, please refer to Appendix 2.

Some examples of my *iftar* meals that consist of all four categories:

- Beef steak with chickpeas, vegetable and nuts salad
- Grilled chicken breast with half a cup lentil soup and 2 cups of grilled vegetables and 1/4 of Avocado

- Salmon, oats and vegetable porridge with 1/2 handful raw nuts

Few important suggestions to make your *iftar* a revitalising one:

- **Keep complex carbs low at *iftār*.** This will keep you feeling light and, therefore, performing *taraweeḥ* will be easier, *insha Allah*.
- **Smaller but more frequent meals are better than 1 or 2 large meals.** So if you can have a light *iftār* and a late night healthy snack, it is better than indulging in a large *iftār*.
- After the supper, **wait at least 30-45 minutes before you hit the bed.**
- **Soups are great at *iftār*,** as they are soothing for the stomach and highly satiating.

### Suḥoor (predawn meal)

*“Eat suḥoor; indeed, there is a blessing in suḥoor.”* (Sahih Bukhary and Muslim)

As Muslims, we know that in the *sunnah* of our Beloved Prophet (PBUH), there are immense benefits for us both in this world and in the Hereafter.

*Suḥoor* being one of the most important *sunnahs* of our beloved Prophet, we understand that it’s certainly best for us in all situations.

Certain researches in the field of Intermittent Fasting indicate that those who have breakfast (in our case *suḥoor*) and then fast, lose more body fat and feel healthier overall.

Though we don't need research to confirm that *suḥoor* is great for us, I felt awestruck comparing the research with the above hadith! Verily in the *sunnah* of our Prophet, we have the best guidance!

For *suḥoor*, I suggest you again eat from all four categories.

	Example	Amount	Remarks
<b>Protein</b>	Fish, Beef, Chicken, Lamb, Turkey	<b>Men:</b> 2 servings <b>Women:</b> 1 serving	1 serving equals the size of your palm
<b>Vegetables</b>	Eat from both green leafy vegetables and colourful vegetables	<b>Cooked:</b> 2 cups OR <b>Raw:</b> 3-4 cups	
<b>Complex (aka super) carbs</b>	Lentils, Legumes, Red Rice, Quinoa, Oats, Potatoes	1 cup	
<b>Healthy Fats</b>	Avocado, walnut, olive oil, coconut, cashew nut	<b>Men:</b> 2 servings <b>Women:</b> 1 serving	1 serving equals the size of your thumb

It's better to increase your complex carbs to one cup at *suḥoor*, as this will help to release energy slowly over a long period of time, *insha Allah*.

Note for premium clients:

You could just have a Power Shake for *suḥoor*. This is ideal for when you are not really hungry but still want something to eat – As for complex carbs I would add one or two scoops of instant or rolled oatmeal to the shake.

In order to give you some food inspiration for *iftār* and *suḥoor*, we are planning to share some Ramadan recipes on Facebook and Instagram

throughout the holy month. Join us on Facebook or Instagram to receive these inspirations.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/leanandhealthyme>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/lean\\_andhealthy/](https://www.instagram.com/lean_andhealthy/)

# Chapter 3: Importance of Hydration

The importance of water is beautifully captured in the following *Ayah* of the Quran: *Allah created every [living] creature from water...* (Al-Qur'an 24:45)

He created water from nothing and from water He created everything. Our body is a reflection of this fact as it consists of almost 70% water. Water in our body helps the blood transport oxygen and other essentials to our cells. Therefore, any reduction in our intake of water can affect our body functions negatively.

For instance, if we aren't getting enough water, our heart has to work harder to pump blood throughout our body. This is an unnecessary extra effort for the heart and it isn't good for the heart in the long run.

The insufficient water level in the body leads to dehydration. The undesirable side effect of dehydration is not simply a headache; instead, it can lead to other more complicated health issues. Some notable and common dehydration symptoms in Ramadan are these:

- Headache
- Sleepiness/Tiredness
- Lack of energy
- Constipation
- Dry skin

Thus keeping yourself hydrated during Ramadan is important for you to feel energetic and for your overall well-being.

Hydration is a highly crucial topic in Ramadan. A recent survey among British Muslims revealed that 81% of them had issues with proper hydration while fasting.

That's why I hope this chapter provides you all with beneficial information about your health during the blessed month.

## Hydration

It is best to drink at least 1.5L of liquid (around 8 glasses) between *iftār* and *suḥoor*. By liquid, I suggest:

1. Water
2. Unsweetened, caffeine-free teas such as mint tea, rooibos tea, fruit tea
3. Unsweetened, freshly squeezed lemon or lime juice with a pinch of salt. This is an excellent way to replenish the body with electrolytes
4. One cup of full-fat milk/unsweetened buttermilk

Stick to these suggestions and remember that water beats everything else on the list – hands down. So, try to get at least 4-5 glasses of water and other 3-4 glasses of other liquid forms.

Some ways you can increase your water intake throughout the non-fasting hours:

1. **One -Two glasses at *iftār*.** Avoid drinking iced water at *iftār*. Iced water can cause your blood vessels to contract and cause indigestion.

2. **Two - three glasses during *taraweeh* prayers.** You can carry a bottle with you and try to sip it between the breaks.
3. **Two glasses at *suḥoor*,** ideally, just after you wake up for *suḥoor*.

## Hydrating Foods

The short time we have between *iftār* and *suḥoor* means that it is challenging to get enough liquid during this time. The solution to this is not complicated – it just means you have to prioritise eating hydrating foods during Ramadan.

**Most vegetables and fruits are very hydrating and so including vegetables and fruits in your diet during Ramadan become super important.** In the table below, I have shared some fruits and vegetables that have a water-content of more than 90%.

If we were to break that down, it means if you eat 100g of roughly chopped vegetables, then 90g of it is water. So eating two-three cups of these vegetables brings with it a glass of water. Now how cool is that!

Please note, the water contents you see are for when the vegetables are raw. Cooking these vegetables does not decrease their water content – except, of course, when you cook it for prolonged periods of time.

Vegetables	Water Content
Cucumber	> 95%
Celery	> 95%
Cabbage	> 95%
Radishes	> 95%

Squash	> 95%
Zucchini	> 95%
Asparagus	> 94%
Tomatoes	> 94%
Cauliflower	> 93%
Bell pepper	> 92%
Kale	> 91%
Beans	> 91%
Beets	> 91%
Spinach	> 91%
Carrot	> 90%
Onion	> 90%
Mushroom	> 90%
Broccoli	> 90%

Fruits	Water Content
Lemon	> 92%
Grapefruit	> 91%
Watermelon	> 91%
Strawberry	> 90%
Cantaloupe	> 90%
Berries	> 88%
Papayas	> 88%
Orange	> 88%

## How to Prevent Dehydration During Ramadan

- Drink plenty of water and other unsweetened liquids
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables
- Have your meals in soup forms
- Avoid caffeinated and sugary drinks
- Avoid hot and spicy foods - they increase thirst.
- Avoid too much salt or salty foods
- Avoid being in direct sun light

## The Role of Soups in Ramadan

I love soups because they taste great and it's easy to get the nutrients I need in a comfortable way. Particularly in Ramadan, I love them more because of the following benefits:

- Due to the rich content of water, **soups are quite hydrating**
- Soups are tasty and **easy to make**
- Soups help us to feel **fuller for longer**. Research studies confirm that soups are satiating and therefore drinking soups can decrease the total energy intake. In other words, soup allows us to control our meal portions and help us to eat less
- Soups that are full of vegetables and lentils can **increase the amount of fibre intake** and decrease the chances of constipation. Constipation is one of the biggest discomforts in Ramadan

- Soups **can be super nutritious** if you add lots of vegetables, complex carbs, protein and healthy fat. Thus, you can get the nutrients from all these food categories in an easy way.

### Chilled Cucumber Yoghurt Soup with Mint

Here is my favourite super hydrating soup recipe.



Serves 2 people

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cucumber, washed
- 2 Tablespoons fresh mint, chopped
- 2 Tablespoons fresh dill, chopped
- 1 cup Milk / Water
- 1 cup Greek yoghurt
- Salt and pepper
- ½ green chilli (optional)

Add 2-3 ice cubes (optional)

**Instructions:**

Blend up the ingredients. That is it – no fuss!

Enjoy!

# Chapter 4: Exercise in Ramadan

Does exercise in Ramadan seem unnecessary or unwise to you?

One of the main reasons most Muslims avoid exercising during Ramadan is this: many assume that they don't have the energy to exercise while fasting while others even think doing exercise will bring hardship to their fasting. Basically, it's a **'mental shackle'** that prevents many Muslims from doing any exercise during Ramadan.

So, if you can overcome this mental shackle, you will realise that doing 15-30 minutes of exercise at the right time will not kill you, rather benefit you immensely. Exercise has the potential not only to reenergise your body and mind but also to increase your productivity during the day and night as well.

## Benefits of Exercise While Fasting

Here are some scientifically proven benefits of exercising while fasting:

- I. Exercising while fasting forces your body to **shed your excess body fat** effectively
- II. It **boosts your cognitive function** (i.e. you'll be able to think and focus better) and prevents depression
- III. It could trigger your genes and growth factors, which **recycle and rejuvenate your brain and muscle tissues**
- IV. Exercising while fasting can **improve your body composition dramatically**. This is because exercising while fasting increases the body's metabolic rate, reduces your body fat, improves your insulin

sensitivity and increases the percentage of your lean muscle mass.

What could be more awesome than that for a lean and healthy body?

However, to enjoy all these great benefits, there is a condition you need to meet - you have to first fix your diet. This means, if you are not eating as I've suggested in Chapter 2, you'll most probably not reap these benefits. So the quality of your *suhour* and *iftar* meals play a crucial role in getting things right in Ramadan.

Before I talk about the 'hows' and 'whats' of exercise during Ramadan, it is important you read and take in these guidelines:

- **For the first three days of Ramadan, don't do any weightlifting or highly intense exercises.** Let your body adapt to fasting. It is best to take it easy and instead stick to walking for 15-30 minutes or to doing some recreational and easy exercises
- **If you are totally exhausted with no energy left, then skip the workouts** and go for a relaxing walk

Note for premium clients:

I would suggest that you stick to the workouts I've provided in your workout calendar.

## Best Type of Exercise During Ramadan

There is a lot of discussion surrounding the best type of exercises to do whilst fasting. Some swear on cardio exercises while others don't go beyond strength training. There are lots of opinions floating around but I don't want to bore you with details. So let me just tell you what you need to know:

- **The prime time for working out during Ramadan is 30 - 60 minutes before *iftār*.** There are multiple reasons why I encourage doing workouts just before *iftār*:
  - After 12-16 hours fast, your body is forced to use your body fat for energy. So working out just before *iftār* increases your fat loss
  - A post-workout meal is essential for your muscles and body to rejuvenate. So getting your meal within 1 to 2 hours after your workout is important
  - Doing workouts while fasting will certainly make you thirsty. So working out just before *iftār* means you don't need to stay thirsty for long
  - A good workout just before *iftār* gives you a real kick of energy for worshipping during the night, *bi'idnillah*.
- Working out after *iftār* brings numerous problems. You could develop lethargy after *iftār* and work out late at night will mess with your sleep quality. This will then make waking up for *suḥoor* harder. But most, importantly the time after *iftār* is meant for some real worship – not for workouts

- **Personally, I don't encourage cardio exercises while fasting.**  
This is because cardio exercises increase dehydration and that is the last thing you want in Ramadan
- The best choice of exercise for losing fat while fasting is strength training exercise. Compared to cardio exercises, strength exercises help you lose more body fat and increases your lean body mass. As a result, you'll have a better body composition
- In order to get all the benefits, we have mentioned earlier, do 15-30 minutes exercise at least three times a week in Ramadan. For the remaining four days, you can do some recreational exercises such as walking

The real key to success is planning. So, to exercise effectively, planning your days in Ramadan is necessary.

Note for premium clients:

## Prevention of Muscle Loss

Ramadan is a special and blessed time for a believer to prioritise their activities towards strengthening their spirituality. Everything else becomes secondary. This is the most important thought to keep in mind when planning your exercise.

When designing this exercise and nutrition guide for you, my focus is not to increase your muscle mass during Ramadan. It's difficult, time-consuming and strenuous to gain more muscle while fasting. As I said before, it's not the priority

of a believer in the blessed month.

However, it's important to prevent yourself from losing muscles, especially since you've worked hard to increase your muscle mass all these weeks and months.

When you stick to the daily lessons, you'll continue to lose weight in Ramadan too. When you lose weight, you will most probably lose some muscle mass as well. This can be prevented through proper meals and appropriate exercise, *insha Allah*.

Though muscle loss and fasting is a science in itself, my focus in this lesson is to show you how you can prevent muscle loss during those days of blissful fasting, *insha Allah*. Without drowning you in too much detail, here is what you need to know:

- **Do the prescribed exercises three times a week.** Do it just before *iftār*, if possible.
- **Eat your protein.** Soon after your *iftār*, make sure you've a quality portion of protein at your meal, especially on the days you work out. Your muscle growth depends on the timing and the quality of the food you eat after your workout. So I suggest along with your high-quality food, have a scoop of protein powder within two hours of your workout.
- **Drink lots of water.**
- **Strive to get some good sleep.** I know, in Ramadan, it's easier said than done. So let's go to the next chapter to master your sleep in Ramadan.

# Chapter 5: Mastering Your Sleep During Ramadan

Allah, in the Qur'an, tells us that He, the Most Merciful, has given us the night as a means of rest and sleep. This is because sleep is vital for a healthy lifestyle.

The topic of sleep in Ramadan is, however, a whole different ball game. **Getting enough sleep while still being able to go to work, school and meet our other commitments tends to be a significant challenge during Ramadan.** And so I have tailored this chapter to help you figure out some solutions.

In our hearts we know Ramadan to be a month of *'ibadah* and religious productivity in this month is certainly at the top of the priority list. Productivity does not just happen; instead, it has to be planned for and definite arrangements have to be made. **Wholesome nutrition, optimal exercise and adequate sleep are the three most important arrangements that need your attention.**

These arrangements are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they impact each other. For example, good nutrition and exercise have tremendous effects on the quality of your sleep. **Research reveals that your eating pattern during Ramadan has an effect on the quality of your sleep. Eating unhealthy foods will almost always result in poor sleep – now you don't want that, do you?**

## Sleep Cycle

In order to get the best quality sleep possible in the limited time, it's important to understand how the sleep cycle works.

When you sleep, you go through five stages of sleep. And these stages are:

- Stage 1: Transition phase (Falling asleep)
- Stage 2: Light sleep
- Stage 3: Deep sleep
- Stage 4: Deep sleep
- Stage 5: Rapid Eye Movement (REM)

Fig. 1

Stages of Sleep					
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Amount	 4-5%	 45-55%	 4-6%	 12-15%	 20-25%
BW*	Alpha Theta	Theta Spindles K-complexes	Theta Delta	Delta Theta	Beta
Characteristics	Beginning of sleep Mainly theta BW but some alpha as when awake Only lasts 5 - 10 minutes Muscle activity slows Occasional twitching	Body Temperature decreases Sudden bursts of brain activity (sleep spindles) High BW peaks followed by negative peaks & occurring after spindles (k-complexes)	Transitional period from light sleep to deep sleep  Slow, delta brain waves begin to emerge  Less than 50% delta waves, the rest are theta waves	Very deep sleep Also referred to as delta sleep  More than 50% slow delta waves  After sleep deprivation there is usually a sharp rebound in SWS**	Rapid eye movement (REM) stage  Beta waves show the brain is quite active  Vivid dreaming occurs at this stage  REM sleep uses up energy unlike SWS
	Light sleep		Deeper slow wave sleep		High brain activity
	← Complete Cycle Approx 90 minutes →				

\* Brain waves \*\* Slow wave sleep

It takes an average person (which is 95% of the population) around 90 minutes to complete the five stages of sleep. But this varies from person to person; hence, the other 5% need slightly more time, between 90 to 120 minutes, to have a complete sleep cycle of all the stages. On completion of all stages of a sleep cycle, the sleeper moves back into Stage 1 and begins a new cycle. Thus our sleep comprises of several repetitive sleep cycles.

## Remember this: 5 sleep stages = 90-120 min sleep cycle

An average person needs around 7-7.5 hours sleep to function properly. During this 7.5 hours period, five sleep cycles would be completed.

During Ramadan, our sleep is fully disturbed. This is mainly caused by the irregular sleeping and waking times, which results in Ramadan tiredness.

There is, however, a magic cure. Well, maybe not magic but a spot of ingenious sleep science. **When you wake up at the beginning or end of 90-120 minute cycle, then there will be less horrible grogginess or visions of your bed – even if you had less sleep.** Cool, right? This is the simple explanation for those days you wake up ready to conquer the world super early with no grogginess and those other days when you sleep forever but wake up feeling tired.

So when setting your alarm clock, do a bit of math and work out the number of sleep cycles you can fit in. Once you have figured it out, then set your alarm at the end of these cycles.

What if it takes you more than 15 minutes to fall asleep? Don't fret – just estimate the time you usually take to fall asleep and add this to your cycle calculation.

Here is an example:

Let's say you hit the bed around 12:00 AM after performing your *taraweeh* prayers and you need to wake up for *suḥoor* before 4 AM. In this scenario, the maximum possible sleep cycles you can have is two, i.e. 3 hours. To these 3 hours, add the time you need to fall asleep, let's say it's 30 min.

Based on these calculations, keep your alarm at 3.30 AM. Having at least two full cycles of sleep and waking up at the end of sleep cycle makes waking up easier and you'll have less grogginess. With a complete sleep cycle, you will feel way better on waking up.

## Determining Your Sleep Cycle Duration

The best way to figure out your sleep cycle is simply through trial and error. For the first day set your alarm clock for a 90 minutes cycle. For the second set it at 100 minutes. For the third day set it for 120 minutes. This way you will be able to determine your exact sleep cycle time.

If you are a tech savvy like me, you can use this app to find out your sleep cycle. I really love this app: <http://www.sleepcycle.com>

## Quick Suggestions for a Good Sleep

If you are looking for some good sleep then these recommendations will help:

- **Overeating and sleeping immediately after meals are two of the main causes affecting our sleep during Ramadan.** So stick to being 80% full and wait at least 30-45 min before you hit the bed.
- Avoid caffeine after *iftār*
- Avoid using ANY electronic devices one hour prior to sleeping
- Make your room cooler: Recommended temperature in your bedroom is 19-21<sup>o</sup> C (67-70<sup>o</sup> F).

There are many ways to ensure you get a good sleep but these are the most important ones. So stick to them, *insha Allah*.

## Find Time for Naps

It is unlikely for us to get enough sleep during the nights of Ramadan. So in order to balance this out it is important to have a few naps during the day.

Basically, there are three types of naps as shown in the following table:

Nap Types	Duration	Remarks
Power Nap	15 minutes	This type of nap provides you with some stage 2 sleep. It is also good for your memory.
Solid Nap	30 minutes	In this type of nap, you wake up just before you go to stage 3 sleep. Waking up in stage 3 sleep will make you groggy.
Full Nap	90 minutes	In this type of nap, you get through a full sleep cycle. You wake up fully refreshed. Ideal nap type during Ramadan.

Work out the best nap type for you and try to fit in as many as you can, *insha Allah*. It is usually around 1-3pm that your body craves a nap so try and plan a nap around this time.

## Maintaining Energy

When it comes to maintaining your energy levels during Ramadan, know that many factors play a role behind the scenes:

1. Wholesome nutrition
2. Optimal exercise
3. Adequate sleep
4. Less stress

I have already covered the basics of nutrition, exercise and sleep during Ramadan, so I am going to tackle stress.

## Stress

Not all stress is the same. While some stress is bad for our body, there are other types of stress that are beneficial for us. Fasting and exercise belong to the latter category.

The positive stress (eustress) created by fasting and exercise brings great health benefits to our body and mind.

However, during the fasting period, we do acquire much negative stress (distress) in the form of less sleep, more work and other family commitments.

When these negative stresses accumulate, it can be very overwhelming during the fasting time.

That's why choosing to do some de-stress activities proactively helps you to feel better overall during Ramadan.

Following are some activities that may help you de-stress and give you relief from the daily negative stresses, *insha Allah*:

**For your mind:**

- I. Engage in doing *dhikr*
  - II. Recite a small portion of Quran after every prayer (even if it's just a page)
  - III. Say the *salawath* upon our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) every chance you get
- Honestly, I could not have given you any more effective stress relievers than the three above!

**For your body:**

- IV. Take a five-minute stroll every hour – this enables better blood circulation and boosts your mood. Why not pair this with some *dhikr* too?
- V. Pamper yourself and take a warm bath – this helps you to unwind and relax. It's a welcome change for the body in Ramadan.
- VI. Do some simple stretching exercises

You may ask; is it really possible to maintain a constant level of energy during Ramadan? The truth is, no. But, looking at Ramadan with doses of positivity; planning to make it your most awesome one yet and using the above techniques will make up for the potential dip in energy.

## The End

Dear Reader,

You have reached the end of the e-book - sad times, I know. I sincerely hope it met your expectations and you enjoyed reading it.

I hope and pray this e-book is immensely beneficial to you and I. I beseech Allah *subhanawuta'ala* to accept this humble work from me.

I have wanted to write a Ramadan e-book for a very long time and I am glad that this dream of mine has finally come to fruition.

A lot of love, time, thinking and care have gone into this e-book. Please read it, look after and most importantly share it. We can create a lean and healthy legacy together one e-book at a time.

Please feel free to send your suggestions and feedback to me directly at [coach@leanandhealthy.me](mailto:coach@leanandhealthy.me).

My heartfelt *du'a* for you to succeed in the month of Ramadan.

Wassalam.

Appendix 1

Goals Ramadan						Penalty
1						
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**How to use this sheet:**

- Set 3 to 5 Ramadan goals and write them in those designated cells
- Stick it on the most frequently seen wall at home/office
- If you have achieved your daily goals, tick it off every day
- If you haven't achieved all your daily goals, you pay a penalty. This should be noted in the "penalty" column (We recommend at least a

5\$ penalty a day. Setting a penalty gives you a sense of accountability.)

- End of Ramadan, you have an overview of your achievement *insha Allah*.
- Money collected through penalty can be given to a charity organization of your choice.

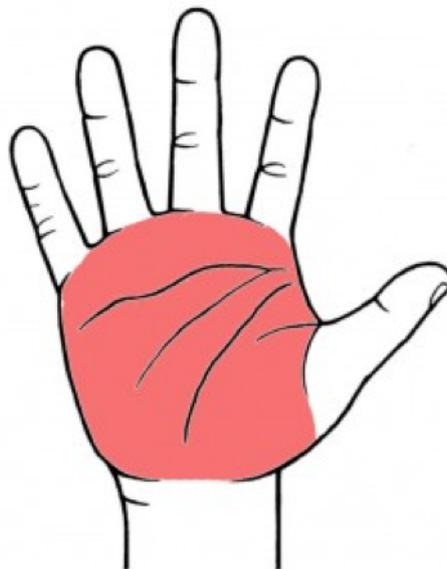
## Appendix 2

### Protein Serving Size

**Men:** eat two servings of protein at each meal

**Women:** eat one serving of protein at each meal

One serving of protein is roughly equal to the size of your palm, in diameter as well in thickness.



# Healthy Fat Guide and Serving Size



## HEALTHY FAT GUIDE

Say <b>YES</b> to these healthy fats:	Say <b>NO</b> to these unhealthy fats:	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Nuts (raw, unflavoured, unsalted)</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Seeds (raw, unflavoured, unsalted)</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Avocado</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Coconut</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Pure Ghee</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Wild caught fatty fish (salmon, mackerel etc.)</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Healthy oils (olive oil, coconut oil etc.)</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Grassfed/ organic butter</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Trans fats</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Margarine</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Hydrogenated oils/fats</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Processed foods such as ice cream, biscuits etc.</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Processed meats such as sausages, deli meats etc.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Fast foods such as burger, French fries</p> </div> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  <p>Most shelf-stable cooking oils such as soybean oil, corn oil etc</p> </div>	
Healthy Fat Portions		
<p>One serving of healthy fat equals to the size of your thumb. In amount it looks like this:</p>		
 <p>6-8 almonds or walnuts</p>	 <p>1/4 of avocado</p>	 <p>1 tablespoon of healthy oil</p>
 <p>Try to add 2 thumbs of serving at each meal.</p>	 <p>Try to add 1 thumb of serving at each meal.</p>	
 		
<a href="http://www.leanandhealthy.me">www.leanandhealthy.me</a>		

﴿رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾

"Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily, You are the Hearer, the Knower." (Al-Quran 2:127)