



Caring for Muslim Children

Ramadan

With you every step of the way

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Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. The word “Ramadan” is derived from an Arabic word for intense heat, scorched ground and shortness of food and drink. It is considered to be the most holy and blessed month.

Ramadan honours the time when Allah, (God) via the angel Gabriel, revealed the first verses of the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam, to a caravan trader named Muhammad (pbuh) also the prophet of Islam. This occurred on Laylat Al-Qadr, one of the last 10 nights of the month. Ramadan is a period of prayer, fasting, charity-giving and self-accountability for Muslims in the United Kingdom.

The holy month of Ramadan is about cleansing the body, heart and soul and the practice reminds Muslims of the suffering of the poor. By abstaining from food, water, smoking and sexual intimacy during daylight hours Muslims participate in the religious ritual of fasting. However there are specific guidelines and rules that apply to determine who should and shouldn’t fast depending on their situation and rules pertaining to what invalidates the fast.

The fact is that young children, pregnant ladies, breastfeeding mothers and ill people are not expected to fast, sometimes the ill, sick and elderly who are exempt from fasting will donate money to the poor instead. Therefore any foster children in your care do not have to fast unless they are over the age of puberty and even then if they are able to do so physically. It is frowned upon to encourage young children to fast as they are not equipped with the physical stamina and psychological willpower to manage without food and water for such long periods of time.

The United Kingdom’s Department of Health have produced a guide to healthy fasting during Ramadan, which aims to help people avoid health complications when they fast. (see attachment)

People of Islamic faith are encouraged to read the entire Qur’an during Ramadan. Some Muslims recite the entire Qur’an by the end of Ramadan through special prayers known as Tarawih, which are held in the mosques every night of the month, during which a section of the Qur’an is recited.

Ramadan begins with moon sighting and ends when the first crescent of the new moon is sighted again, marking the new lunar month’s start. Eid-al-Fitr is the Islamic holiday that marks the end of Ramadan. Eid al-Fitr (Id-ul-Fitr) celebrations including wearing new clothes, exchanging gifts, eating festive food and attending special services at a Mosque or place of worship. During Eid Muslims usually give a special gift of money (Zakah) to charity, it is collected and given to Muslims who are poor or in need.

Ramadan in 2019 started on Monday, the 6th of May and will continue until the new crescent moon is sighted (29-30 days).

How to support your Muslim Foster Child during Ramadan

Fasting is only prescribed upon those past the age of puberty so if your foster child is under age there is no obligation upon them to fast. They may join in with the community in prayer and meals but do not need to fast. Provide access to prayer mats, a Quran and ethnic foods of their choice such as dates, rice, chapatti, fresh fruit and if they wish to pray or read Quran at a local mosque then facilitate this where possible. Ask your foster child what foods they like and have them in stock. Recipes for many are online.

If children under 12 wish to fast then discuss this with their social worker and school who can monitor and decide if it is suitable. If you foster a teenager who wishes to fast then you can support them by being aware of the process.

From sunrise to sunset there is no food or water to be consumed. For correct timings prayer and iftaar (fast breaking) timetables are available online and from local mosques. There are 5 daily prayers and a special Ramadan Tarawih prayer joined with the last prayer of the night that is performed in mosques for males and females generally pray at home.

A day in the life of a fasting Muslim may look something like this:

1. Go to bed - then wake up for night meal around 1am and state intention to fast the next day - currently sunrise is around 3:30am so you can eat and drink until 3am
2. Pray Fajr first prayer of the day at dawn
3. Go to school/college/work and not eat or drink, no sexual activity either
4. Return home perform daily afternoon prayers of Zuhr and Asr, do any homework.
5. At Maghrib prayer time which is sunset you open the fast by stating the intention to make Iftaar (breaking fast meal) then open the fast - and eat dates, drink water, have fresh foods/fruits. (Refer to the healthy eating guide)
6. Then after opening the fast with food and water - pray the Maghrib prayer. Males may wish to perform this in mosques.
7. Last prayer of the day is Isha and Tarawih prayers are added - this is to be prayed in mosques for males.
8. Eat your evening meal and go to bed after Isha set the alarm to awaken for Suhoor (nightmeal) and the cycle begins again.

As you can see there is a daily routine for the month and this helps to maintain a Muslims identity and faith during this holy month. At the end of Ramadan upon the moon sighting Eid is celebrated as described above with gift giving, prayers, special foods and family gatherings. You can get involved by being creative and cooking ethnic foods, making Eid cards with your Muslim foster child to give out to friends and family, facilitating Eid contact and mosque trips, and offering charity.



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Fosterline is funded by the
Department for
Education and delivered
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