



HOW TO KEEP SAFE DURING RAMADAN 2020

What is Ramadan?

The holy month of Ramadan mandates that Muslims abstain from food and water during daylight hours and occurs on the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. There are exceptions, however, for children, those who are ill or too elderly, women who just given birth (or are breastfeeding) or are menstruating. By focusing on what the body needs, it helps Muslims to focus their attention on the presence of Allah (God) and the necessities provided by Allah in their daily lives.

It's a time to be with loved ones, for religious reflection, the act of giving to others and charity (zakat, a pillar of the Islamic faith which obligates donating a set proportion of one's wealth).

Depending on when the moon is sighted, Ramadan is expected to fall on either April 23 or April 24. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, mosques nationwide will remain closed, as they continue to observe the lockdown.

Eid-al-Fitr which concerns the breaking of the fast, occurs at the end of Ramadan, whereas Eid-al-Adha, the feast of the sacrifice, occurs months later, typically when for many Muslims, they visit Mecca in Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj (the fifth and final pillar of Islam), which occurs in Dhu al-Hijjah, the final month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

What is The Religious Significance of Ramadan?

The month in Ramadan is mentioned in the Qur'an as "whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it; whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days." (Quran 2:185).

Ramadan is the month where the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel who commanded him to recite. This day, which falls on the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh day of Ramadan, is known as the Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr).

This month of intense spiritual and religious reflection means that many Muslims will attempt to recite as much of the Quran as possible during the month. Most mosques will aim to recite one-thirtieth of the Quran during the Taraweeh prayers.

Fasting allows Muslims to also achieve piety (taqwā), spiritual purification (tazkiyah al-nafs), amid this period of reflection, charity, forgiveness, togetherness, and cohesion. During the final ten days of Ramadan, some Muslims will practise I'tikaf, a period of deep spiritual reflection, where some will live in a mosque, or dedicate more hours there when not at home.

Ramadan is also considered important as the gates of heaven are open as the gates of hell stay shut, with the devils chained up.



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The Impact of COVID-19

Mosques nationwide suspended Friday prayers, daily congregational prayers, and educational classes, when the government announced the lockdown of non-essential workplaces and institutions on March 23rd.

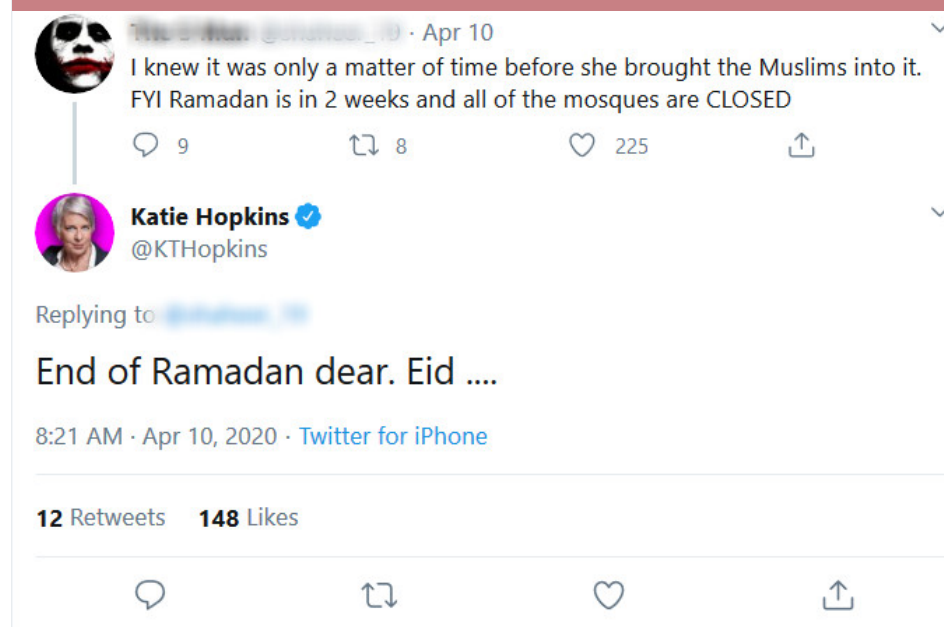
It's worth remembering that some mosques had suspended activities even before the formal lockdown announcement.

There was broad scholarly agreement that Islamically, the maxim of preserving life and removing harm, supersedes public acts of worship.

Myth-Busting

The far-right and other anti-Muslim ideologues have attempted to drive up anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiment on social media with out-of-context videos and photographs. We have debunked some key talking points below and offer some tips about internet research methods and how you can flag hateful content on the major social media platforms.

Won't the lockdown end in time for the end Ramadan? How convenient...



Not true. Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, the government must decide if it will renew the three-week lockdown which will put restrictions in place until late May (or beyond if necessary). Other European countries, like France for example, are in lockdown until May 11, having extended it once already, even with a partial lifting of restrictions, hotels, restaurants, and cinemas would stay closed for longer.

Muslims can turn their spare bedrooms into places of worship and NOT pay council tax

Again, this incendiary anti-Muslim myth pre-dates the pandemic and has circulated in various forms on Facebook for several years. Variations of this myth speak of a so-called "Muslim council tax exemption." The fact-checking charity Full Fact debunked this myth last year in a piece which concluded that places of worship do not pay business rates if they gain official recognition that the primary function of the property is for religious worship.

There are a range of websites which provide reverse image search functions, including Google, TinEye, Yandex Images, and Bing. Have you seen an image or video making bold claims? Well, here are some things to consider: have journalists or police forces confirmed its validity? Are there any news articles in your local press about it? Ask someone you trust if they've heard of this story. There's a range of credible websites that provide fact checks, including Snopes, Full Fact, the BBC Reality Check, and social media accounts like Social Media Hoax-Slayer and Pic Pedant (@PicPedant). For more tips and tricks, consult this [free guide](#) produced to improve social media and internet literacy skills.

Employment Rights During Ramadan

The reality for some means working from home, where employers still must ensure their wellbeing and pay them regularly and maintain contact. Some will continue to work in sectors deemed 'essential'. The employment support service ACAS calls for flexibility among employers, employees, and workers when it comes to holidays during the pandemic, including why holidays are needed or cancelled, with an understanding that it is a difficult time for everyone. Furloughed workers can request and take their holidays with approval.

Many Muslims would have requested annual leave for days off during Ramadan and for Eid, but if anything changes, it is recommended to speak with your employers if anything changes. Employers can cancel pre-booked holidays but must give an equal amount of notice as the original request, per ACAS guidance. For example, if you pre-booked five days of annual leave, your employer must give five days' notice of cancellation.

Muslims working in front-line emergency services will work long shifts and with fasts expected to last 16 to 17 hours, some groups, including the National Association of Muslim Police are advising personnel to bring pre-prepared food from home to circumvent potential shortages in supermarkets. Employers should (where possible) allow Muslim staff who are not working from home access to set refreshment time for the opening and closing of fasts, and a time for staff to also rest, given the prolonged fasting time, warm to hot weather, and added stress of working during the pandemic. Employers are not obligated to automatically give annual leave for religious festivals or holidays, but best practice is to consider all requests with an open-mind, sensitivity, respect, and where possible, be reasonable and flexible with requests. A refusal to grant such requests without a good business reason may amount to religious discrimination.

Tell MAMA, in partnership with a local branch of the GMB trade union, created guidance on workplace discrimination issues, with support and information on the grievance process through to tribunals. This is a free resource available on our website [HERE](#).

Getting The Essentials You Need

We urge everyone to follow the government guidelines and only go outside for exercise, food, or for work (where it is possible to not work from home).

If you or anyone in your household due to a pre-existing or underlying health condition, is listed as being extremely vulnerable to Covid-19, the advice is always to stay at home and avoid any face-to-face contact for at least 12 weeks. The medical conditions listed include (but are not limited to) those have had a solid organ transplant, have cancer (and are receiving treatment for it), or severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, and severe COPD. Women who are pregnant (with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired). And those who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last six months (or who continue to use immunosuppression drugs).

You, or on behalf of someone else who requires shielding, can register online for support in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

During the registration process, you can request assistance in getting essentials or care needs. Registering in England, for example, requires your NHS number, found on any correspondence sent to your address or on a prescription.

If you live in England and registered as extremely vulnerable to Covid-19 through the GOV.UK website and received a letter from the NHS, this information is shared with supermarkets like Sainsbury's, who offer priority delivery slots.

This can be booked through their respective websites.

If you do not have anyone who can collect your medicine, speak to your community pharmacy team for further advice.

The government has amended guidance allowing for people with learning disabilities or autism to leave the house for exercise more than once a day and travel outside of their local areas "ideally in line with a care plan agreed with a medical professional."

Carers and support workers who do not live in their households can accompany them.

This is important as some on the autistic spectrum need quieter spaces outside of the home, according to the National Autistic Society.



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Personal Safety Tips

When out for health reasons, for shopping, or going to or from work during Ramadan, ensure that you are aware of your surroundings and plan your routes to and from your home (and try to stick to them where possible), sticking to well-lit, public areas.

If you use public transport, note down departure times, and your nearest bus stops.

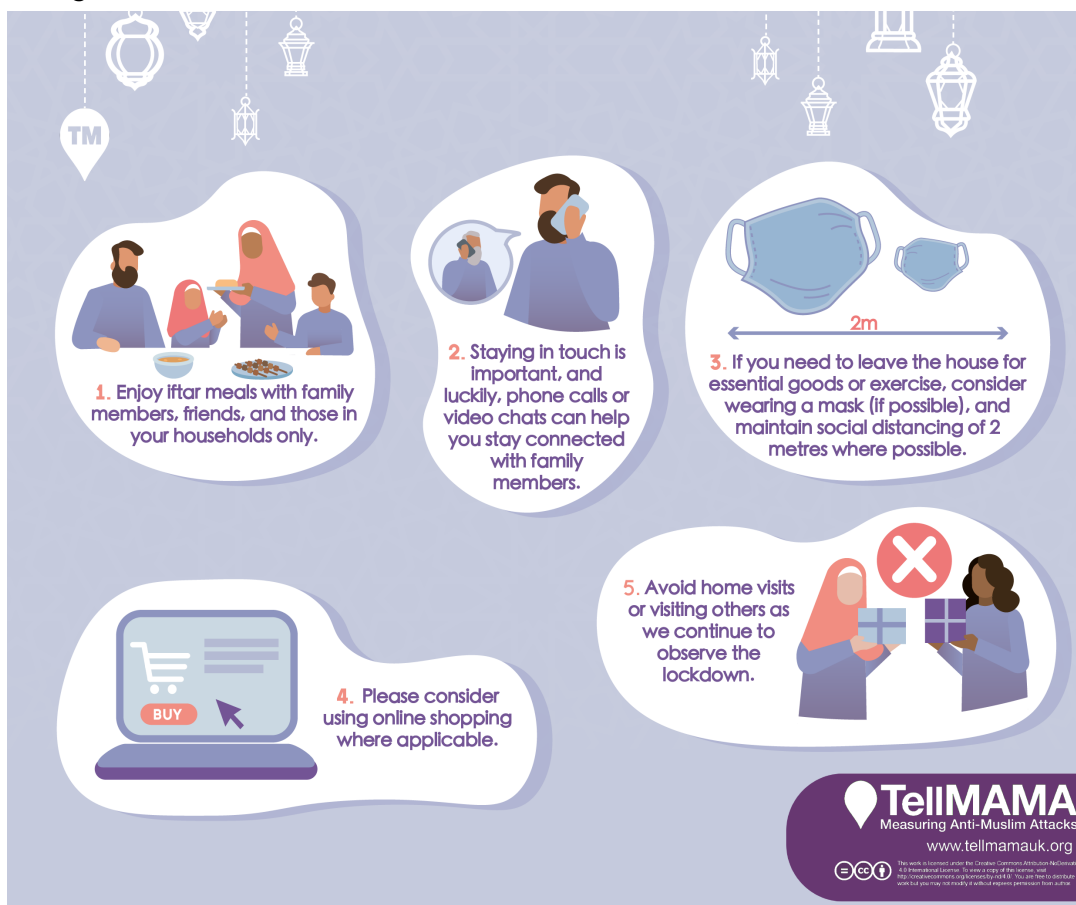
Send a message to loved ones if you leave the house, particularly following Maghrib, Isha, and Fajr prayers at home.

You may wish to carry a personal alarm as a precaution.

Supermarkets and shops will enforce social distancing measures and we urge vigilance when queuing or when working as security, as Tell MAMA has received various reports of Muslims being harassed and targeted with abuse (even when observing and complying with distancing measures).

If you are abused or attacked, call 999 in an emergency, otherwise, call the non-emergency 101 number, or, report hate crimes and incidents online via the True Vision platform.

If safe to do so, take a photograph or video of the perpetrator(s), and try to remember their identifiable features (e.g. distinct clothing, appearance, tattoos, piercings), any vehicle registration details (if relevant), make a note of the time and location of the incident (to the best of your knowledge).



#Ramadan2020 #RamadanatHome #RamdanMubarak #StayHomeSaveLives

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