

# Ramadan Factsheet 2019

## When is Ramadan?

Ramadan will begin this year approximately on **Monday 6 May and it will last for 29-30 days**. Muslims follow the lunar calendar, so the exact start and end dates depend on the sighting of the moon.



## What is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, it's the month where Muslims fast during daylight hours.

There are several reasons why Ramadan is considered important:

- It's said that the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Mohammed during this month by the angel Gabriel
- It's one of the five pillars of Islam
- For many Muslims it's an opportunity to self-reflect and improve themselves

## Ritual fasting

Ramadan is known as the month of fasting, when Muslims abstain from all food, drinks and smoking from dawn to dusk. Fasting is not required for Muslims who are ill, very old, very young, pregnant or breastfeeding. Muslims who are ill at the time, can make up the days they have missed at another time in the year.

Fasting during this month is considered a way to burn away all sins. Muslims believe that the Qur'an was sent down to the lowest heaven during this month, and being prepared for gradual revelation by Angel Gibril (Gabriel) to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The overall purpose of the fast is to gain Taqwa (which means to gain goodness or God consciousness). During Ramadan most Muslims will wake before dawn for a meal and when daylight is over will break the fast with dates and water and then a meal (Iftar).

Muslims also use this month to re-evaluate their lives in light of Islamic guidance. Ramadan is much more than not eating and drinking; Muslims believe it is a time to purify the soul, refocus their attention on God, and practice self-discipline and sacrifice. For this month this usually means striving to do even more good deeds than normal like giving charity and trying harder to avoid bad deeds like being argumentative or falling out with friends and family. Almost all Muslims try to give up bad habits during Ramadan. Some will try to become better Muslims by praying more or reading the Qur'an.

## End of Ramadan celebrations – Eid-al-Fitr

Eid-al-Fitr is the festival that marks the end of Ramadan and this year will take place around 4 June. It's a joyous occasion and a day of true thanksgiving for Muslims. The day begins with giving to charity and prayers in the mosque, and then sharing celebratory meals with family and friends and exchanging gifts. As with the start of Ramadan, the exact date of Eid is also dependent on the sighting of the moon.

The festival lasts for up to three days and is a time for family and friends to get together.

## Top Tips for Ramadan and Eid

It's important that all of our colleagues can be themselves at work. We also want to encourage all of our colleagues to be curious about other cultures to become more inclusive.

### Know your team – conversations

- Let your team know that you're aware that Ramadan is approaching and you're aware of the responsibilities it presents for some colleagues. Having this conversation will encourage people to come to you if they need any adjustment to their normal working pattern or need any other support. Islam is a faith that welcomes people of all races and backgrounds. So don't make assumptions about who in your team may be observing Ramadan or not. It is also essential to note that **not all Muslims will fast**. This should be respected and take care not to offend people who are not fasting by asking for reasons to why they are not.

### Fasting

Fasting affects people in different ways. For example some people might be quieter than usual or slightly tired at times and for other you may notice no change at all. You might want to consider the following:

- Colleagues who are fasting will not expect others who are not observing Ramadan to do the same. So don't feel anxious about making a cup of tea or eating your lunch. However, be sensitive by not continually offering a fasting person a slice of cake!
- Consider the energy levels of those who are fasting. Try and avoid arranging 'working lunches' and physically demanding events/ off sites in the month of Ramadan. If they can't be avoided, then try and arrange these as early in the day as possible.
- Ensure colleagues that are working during Ramadan are allowed time to break their fast on time, and where possible try and ensure that there is bottled water and dates available.

### Flexible working

While many Muslims increase their worship during this month, the majority also continue with their normal duties as usual. Muslim colleagues may wish to have some flexibility within their work arrangements. Consider the following:

- Give colleagues time off for prayer. During Ramadan Muslims will pray up to 5 times a day and each prayer will last between 15 and 20 minutes.
- Give colleagues time off to go mosque for Friday prayer (around 1pm-2pm) this prayer is a must for Muslims but even more so during Ramadan.
- Let colleagues start work earlier or later than usual to enable them to be at home or the mosque when they break their fast.
- Remember that colleagues may also wish to take annual leave during Ramadan or to celebrate Eid.

### Help to educate

Helping all of our colleagues to understand different cultures, enables a more inclusive culture and taking an active part can help to build understanding, deepen relationships and demonstrate a genuine commitment of celebrating all of the differences our colleagues bring. You could:

- Talk about Ramadan, celebrate Eid or take part in Iftars (the celebratory meal after the fast is broken at the end of the day)
- Talk to colleagues about how you could take part as a team, visit a local mosque or get more involved in the local community.