For health professionals:

The Muslim community in the ACT is diverse, dynamic and growing. In 2011, 7,434 people in the ACT (2% of the population) identified as Muslim. This increased by 70% from 2006. Around a quarter of Muslim people in the ACT were born in Australia. The next most common birthplaces were Pakistan (13%), Bangladesh (11%), Indonesia (6%), Afghanistan (4%), Saudi Arabia (4%), Iran (4%), Lebanon (3%), India (3%) and Iraq (3%).

Ramadan is an important month-long event for Muslim people around the world. The dates of Ramadan are lunar-based and change each calendar year. In 2015, Ramadan will begin in mid-June. During the month of Ramadan, many Muslims fast (i.e., abstain from food, water, smoking and taking medicine) from sunrise to sunset. A fasting person usually eats a small meal before sunrise and a large, often high-calorie meal after sunset.

While certain groups are not expected to fast (e.g., children, elderly people, pregnant and nursing women, people who are ill and people who are travelling), some people with ongoing health conditions choose to observe Ramadan by fasting. Fasting may affect the management of several health conditions, including diabetes.

People with diabetes may have different physiological responses to fasting during the day and eating a large meal at night, depending on the type of diabetes and how it is usually managed (e.g., with insulin, other medicines such as metformin, or diet). The most common complications are hypoglycaemia, hyperglycaemia, diabetic ketoacidosis, and dehydration and thrombosis.

Before Ramadan begins, health professionals should learn about how their Muslim patients observe Ramadan, as practices may differ significantly between individuals, and be able to offer guidance on how to best manage diabetes, and other health conditions, during this period.

Potential changes to patients’ usual practices, such as eating a larger meal before sunrise and several smaller meals after sunset, should be considered and discussed with individual patients. Muslim patients may see fasting during Ramadan as an important religious and spiritual duty, and this issue should be treated with respect and sensitivity.

Example resources regarding the management of diabetes during Ramadan are listed on the following page.

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) provides interpreting services in over 160 languages. Interpreters are available on-site or by telephone by phoning 131 450.
Resources regarding diabetes management during Ramadan


Kobeissy, Abdallah et al. 2008. Suggested Insulin Regimens for Patients with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus Who Wish to Fast During the Month of Ramadan. *Clinical Therapeutics* 30(8): 1408-1415.


References

1 Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014. *The People of the Australian Capital Territory: Statistics from the 2011 Census*. Barton, ACT: DIBP.


