

Ramadan & diabetes

For people with diabetes:

While certain groups are not expected to fast during the month of Ramadan (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.

Diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body doesn't produce or properly use insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas that transforms glucose from food into energy. This leads to raised blood glucose levels which are associated with damage to various organs and tissues over time.

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce insulin. **Type 2 diabetes** occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin, or insulin cannot be processed. **Gestational diabetes** occurs when insulin is less effective during pregnancy.

In 2009-10, 7% of the ACT population was ever diagnosed with diabetes or high blood glucose. However, for every person diagnosed with diabetes in the community there is probably one undiagnosed person, so around 13% people of the ACT might have diabetes.

People with diabetes may have different physical 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 (low blood glucose levels), hyperglycaemia (high blood glucose levels), diabetic ketoacidosis (when the body burns fat for energy instead of glucose, resulting in dangerous chemicals building up in the blood), and dehydration and thrombosis (abstaining from water and other liquids can result in dehydration; this may increase the risk of blood clots and stroke).

However, **some people with diabetes can reduce their risk of complications during Ramadan by making small changes** to their usual practices, such as eating a larger meal before sunrise and several smaller meals after sunset.

Before Ramadan begins, people with diabetes should speak to their usual health professional/s about their fasting practices during Ramadan and any changes to medicine, diet (outside the daylight fasting period) and/or physical activity that should be made to best manage their diabetes.

If you feel unwell during Ramadan, you should contact your general practitioner (GP) or the emergency department of your nearest hospital.



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