

# Ramadan: A Guide for UC Davis Medical Center Faculty, Residents, and Students.

## What is Ramadan?

- Ramadan is the name of one of the months of the Islamic calendar, based on the lunar cycle.
- Muslims believe Ramadan is a sacred month, during which the Quran (Holy Book) was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed.
- Muslims fast from food and water every day in Ramadan from dawn to sunset.
- After breaking the fast, Muslims often attend special late prayers that happen each night of Ramadan.
- It is a month of prayer, improvement of character, mindfulness, and doing good deeds.

## When is Ramadan and how long does it last?

- Ramadan is the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Islamic calendar, lasting 29-30 days.
- Each Gregorian calendar year, Ramadan comes about a week before the previous year. For example, in 2018 Ramadan started May 15, and in 2019, Ramadan started May 5.

## A student or resident on my team is fasting Ramadan. What should I be aware of?

- Fasting is hard, especially if Ramadan occurs during the seasons when the days are longer and hotter.
- If a fasting individual is asking to leave the operating room (for example) to break their fast, realize that they have not been eating or drinking anything since dawn.

## I am fasting Ramadan and I am about to start a hard rotation. Should I let my team know I am fasting?

- First and foremost, you absolutely have a right to fast and break your fast in a timely manner.
- You also have a responsibility to carry out your work and duties as a team member.
- The timing of when to let your team know about your fasting is up to you. Some may feel comfortable bringing it up, and others may not. Either way, know that your team needs to let you exercise your religious rights.
- Think about what you may be doing on your rotation during the time when you will be breaking your fast and plan accordingly. For example, if you are going to be in a long surgery, tell your team that you will need to step out for 5 minutes. Pack some food in your pocket for quick access.

## For those who are fasting, what are some signs during fasting that may warrant ending the fast before sunset?

- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Headache
- Signs or symptoms of hypoglycemia
- Signs or symptoms of dehydration
- If you are physically unable to go about your normal daily function due to fasting, you should stop fasting.
- But remember that each individual should do their best to make adjustments to the complete the fast.

## What are ways for those who are fasting to make the day go more smoothly?

- Hydrate well during suhur (the predawn meal) and eat *lightly*.
- Taper off caffeine 1-2 weeks prior to Ramadan to avoid caffeine withdrawal headaches during the first few days of Ramadan. Try to avoid caffeinated drinks during Ramadan.
- Carry dates, water and a snack (something you can “eat on the go”) in your backpack or pocket.
- Minimize excessive physical exertion during your fasting, e.g. use the elevator not the stairs
- If you are feeling faint and you are concerned, let your team know you are fasting and need to rest.
- If you are feeling significantly ill, break your fast.