



MAMMAS Breastfeeding Support Ramadan and breastfeeding



Did you know that in Islam women who are pregnant or nursing their babies are not required to fast during Ramadan and are permitted to make up for the missed fasts at a later time? The verse of the Quran which relates to this is as follows:

“Observe Saum (fasts)] for a fixed number of days, but if any of you is ill or on a journey, the same number (should be made up) from other days. [...] (2:184).

Scholars agree that pregnant and nursing mums fall in the category of people who are ill or on a journey.

Islam recognises how tiring it can be for Mums who are breastfeeding, with their body working hard to meet the demands of a growing baby, and has given this exemption to ease their life. It will be beneficial for both you and the baby if you take advantage of this exemption, especially if the baby is less than 1 year old, as with very young babies there is the possibility that your milk supply could be affected by your fasting, if you are just establishing it.

If your baby is on solids and your milk supply is well established and you do decide to fast, there is less chance that your fasting will have an effect on your milk production. The weight gain and growth rate of breastfed older babies does not appear to be affected by their mother fasting during Ramadan. However, especially during the long summer fasts, it can still be very difficult for Mums to cope with the demands of both breastfeeding and fasting, and the exemption from fasting is there as a mercy from Allah to help mothers to fulfil the child's right to two years of breastfeeding.



In fact it is more pleasing to Allah when we take advantage of a concession that we have been given, and we do not need to feel bad for not fasting for this reason. As breastfeeding your baby during the first years is crucial and this is a time which once gone cannot be brought back, in order to avoid having regrets later, it is advisable to report the fasting for later and concentrate your efforts in ensuring the well-being of your baby.

If you choose not to fast, which is completely legitimate, there are many other ways for you to seek the rewards and spiritual boost of Ramadan, and the time you spend breastfeeding can be put to good use for example for reading the Quran, etc... Also bear in mind that breastfeeding too is a form of worship if done with the right intention.



One other important point for a breastfeeding mum to remember is to take care of your own physical health, whether you are fasting or not. This can be quite tricky especially if everybody else is fasting, but your body and that of your baby have the same demands whether in Ramadan or outside. So it will be a good idea to stock up on your favourite healthy snacks, such as fresh or dried fruit, nuts, and yoghurt, and keep in mind some easy and healthy lunch recipes, especially ones that can be prepared ahead, such as sandwiches or pasta or rice salads.

Dates are also an excellent source of nutrients for breastfeeding mums.

Below are some handy tips for Mums who are breastfeeding while fasting:

- Do shopping and other chores that require extra energy (such as spring-cleaning) before the start of Ramadan
- Keep a food diary to keep track of what you are eating and drinking overnight, so you can make sure that you are getting a good balance of healthy, nutritious foods.
- Drink plenty when you break your fast, but not so much that you have no room for food-getting enough calories is important too.
- Do not skip Suhoor (the pre-dawn meal) as your body will need to store as many nutrients as it can -set an alarm clock if needs be.
- As there is some evidence that fasting can affect the levels of some nutrients in breast-milk (zinc, magnesium and potassium), it is important to eat well, and perhaps take a vitamin supplement for breastfeeding mums.
- Keep cool and rest as much as you can during the day. You might find it helpful to nap when your baby does.
- If you begin to notice signs of dehydration (headaches, feeling thirsty, feeling dizzy or faint), break your fast with water, ideally with some sugar and salt added, to rehydrate you quickly.
- Listen to your body and speak to a health professional if you feel unwell, and follow the advice that they give to you.

If breastfeeding problems develop while you are fasting you are always welcome to call us on our breastfeeding helpline:

Mammas breastfeeding helpline – 07794667791

Gujarati/Urdu helpline – 07794667901

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