

Breastfeeding in Ramadan

By the CHEERing Team



What is Ramadan?



- Ramadan is the holiest month in the Islamic calendar
- It is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed and is a time of fasting
- Fasting involves abstaining from food, drinks, and sexual activity from dawn to sunset

Who Fasts in Ramadan?

- In general, it is prescribed for Muslims who have reached puberty to fast throughout the month of Ramadan
- However, there are some groups of people who are exempted from fasting
- These could include older adults, pregnant or nursing mothers, menstruating women, and those who are ill or travelling; people for whom it may cause a lot of hardship



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Breastfeeding in the Islamic Tradition

- Breastfeeding is the safest, healthiest way to feed a baby
- Breastfeeding protects against viruses
- During COVID-19 and always, breast is best
- The Qur'an and prophetic traditions of Islam also encourage breastfeeding for the first two years of life

“Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]” – Q2: verse 233



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How Does Fasting Affect Breastfeeding?

- There are multiple opinions on the impact of fasting on breastfeeding
- Some sources have reported that fasting affects milk supply and nutrient levels
- Pregnant and breastfeeding moms should consult their doctor and religious scholars for advice, so they can make the decision that is best for them and their baby

If You Decide to Fast...

- Pay attention to your body
 - Headaches and dizziness may indicate dehydration
- Pay attention to your baby
 - Weight loss, stagnation, decreased number of wet diapers, excessive fussiness may indicate that your baby is not getting enough milk

Maintaining a Good Milk Supply While Fasting



- Drink lots of water between Iftar (sunset) and Fajr (dawn)
 - Drink water in bits throughout the permitted time, lemon slices and mint leaves can be added to enhance the taste
 - Skip sugary beverages and focus on drinking water instead



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Maintaining a Good Milk Supply While Fasting

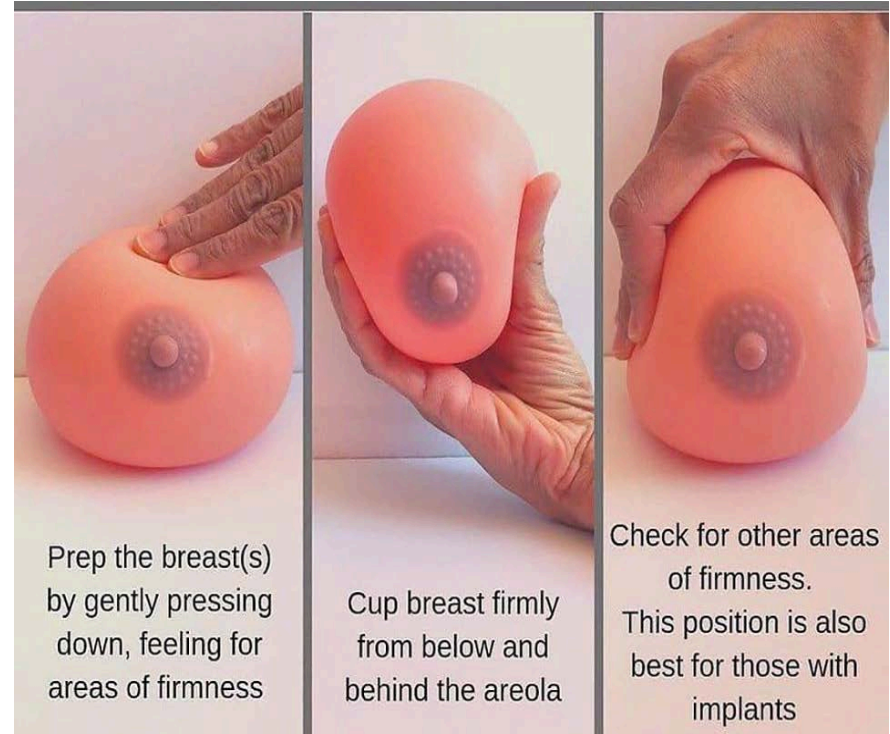
- Maintain a healthy diet
 - Eat meals consisting of proteins and complex carbohydrates during suhoor (the early morning meal)
 - Break your fast with well-balanced meals including high energy foods
- Eat adequately but do not overeat



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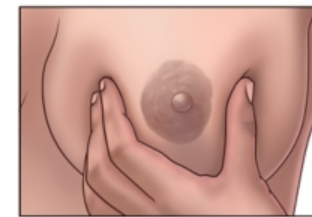
Hands-on-Breastfeeding

- For mothers who breastfeed directly from the breast, your milk ejection reflex might slow down towards the end of the fasting day
- If your baby gets fussier, apply breast compressions while feeding to help drain out milk from the breast
- You will notice improved milk transfer and baby gets satisfied more quickly

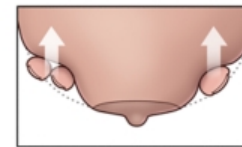


Breast Milk Expression

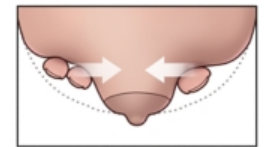
- When pumping or hand expressing, some mothers may have a lower yield of expressed milk towards the end of the day
- If your milk supply is low, stay calm and keep expressing!
- Drink plenty water at iftar to stay hydrated



1. Push in toward chest wall



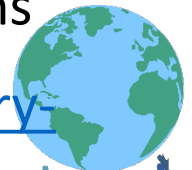
2. Squeeze breast tissue



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Resources for Breastfeeding Mothers

- Nor Kamariah Mohamad Alwi. Ramadan and Breastfeeding. <https://lactationmatters.org/2018/06/07/ramadan-and-breastfeeding/?fbclid=IwAR2ONNXoglfRZZsM1N1KgJcedLHd60OT7IsJJp1FuYMsEj7p8lpLzouvYI>
- Nazima Qureshi. Fasting During Ramadan as a Breastfeeding Mom. <https://www.nutritionbynazima.com/single-post/breastfeeding-fasting>
- Noorhan Barakat. Fasting while breastfeeding is safe, research indicates. Gulf News. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/health/fasting-while-breastfeeding-is-safe-research-indicates-1.1061355>
- World Health Organization (WHO). Dietary recommendations for the month of Ramadan. <http://www.emro.who.int/nutrition/nutrition-infocus/dietary-recommendations-for-the-month-of-ramadan.html>



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