

# FEASTING

Feasting forms an essential part of religious life with the notions of generosity, sharing and celebration, but it can be a dangerous time for people with Type 2 Diabetes due to the types of foods consumed. By taking care to limit the amount of 'unhealthy' foods eaten it is possible to feast safely.

## What can happen?

When celebrating at religious feasts you will be encouraged to eat large amounts of sweetmeats and fried foods. This can lead to potentially dangerous weight gain and increases the risk of high blood sugar. Feasting may also be accompanied by vigorous dancing, so remember to bring suitable snacks (eg. sugar lumps or dates) to eat should you feel your blood sugar dropping. It is very important to monitor the amount and type of food you are eating during the festivities.

## Safe feasting

Feast safely by following these simple rules:

### Disease management

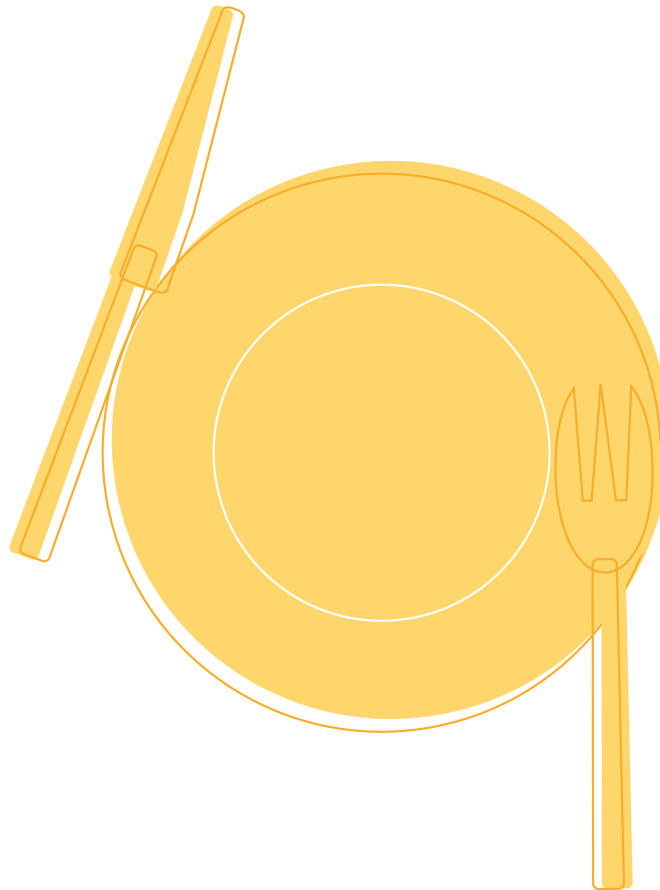
- Check your blood sugar regularly
- Remember to take your medication

### Diet control

- Avoid excess 'unhealthy' foods
- Remember to keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of non-alcoholic fluids
- Return to a well-balanced diet as soon as the festivities are over

### Seek medical assistance

- At the first sign of any complications you must stop fasting and seek medical advice and assistance. Your GP or Practice Nurse will know you are fasting and be on hand to help you.

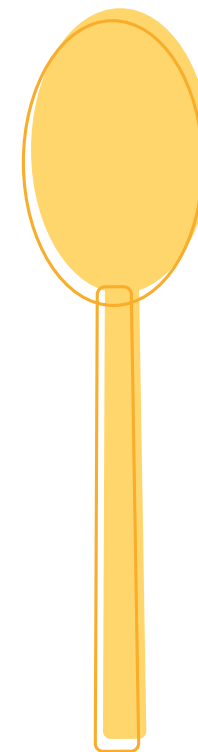


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*fasting*  
AND  
feasting

Provided as a service to medicine by Servier Laboratories Ltd



Information for  
**Patients** with  
**Type 2 Diabetes**

English Version

This leaflet aims to offer useful advice for **Asian people with Type 2 Diabetes** wishing to take part in religious festivals where **fasting/feasting** are involved.

## FASTING

Fasting is an important aspect of certain religious events as well as forming part of an enhanced spirituality. It is always important to be aware of your physical status when fasting, especially during extended periods of fasting. However, it is possible to fast safely by carefully managing your condition.

### What can happen?

During extended periods of fasting, where food and drink are only allowed at night and fasting can last up to 18 hours (depending on the season and geography), your dietary pattern will change. The lack of food can lead to an increased risk of low blood sugar (*hypoglycaemia* often called 'hypos') and this followed by a large intake of food to break the fast may lead to a risk of sudden surge in blood sugar levels (*hyperglycaemia*).

### What is a 'hypo'?

A 'hypo' is when the level of sugar in the blood falls to a low level. If you experience a 'hypo' during your fast, you must break the fast immediately with something very sweet such as glucose tablets, sugar lumps, chocolate or sugary drinks. Once you have started feeling better, eat starchy food such as toast or a chapatti.

#### Symptoms of a 'hypo'

Blurred vision, headache, nausea, trembling, sleepiness, hunger, faintness or confusion.

### Blood testing

Blood testing should be done during fasting periods to monitor your blood sugar levels (blood sugar less than 4mmols is a hypo). Finger pricking is an accurate way to test your blood, and your doctor or Practice Nurse can teach you how. **This will not break your fast.**

### Safe fasting

You should be evaluated by your GP/Practice Nurse before you begin your fast to assess your physical well-being. Once you have been given the go ahead it will be up to you to manage your diabetes and monitor any changes in your condition.

### Important things to remember that will play a role in the success of a fast are:

#### Drug regimen adjustment

- Do not stop taking your medication. Your GP/Practice Nurse will advise you on taking your medication appropriately. As your eating patterns will change, you may need to change the times or the amount of medication you take.

#### Diet control

- It is important to avoid eating a large amount of unhealthy food. On breaking the fast, try and maintain a healthy diet whenever possible and drink plenty of fluids.
- Record what you eat during the day to prevent eating too much or too little.
- Weigh yourself daily and let your GP/Practice Nurse know of any weight loss (dehydration, low food intake, excessive passing of urine) or weight gain (excessive calorie intake) above two kilograms/five pounds.

#### Daily activity

- It is important to take moderate exercise.

### Proper understanding

- Make sure you have asked your GP/Practice Nurse any questions you might have about fasting and how it might affect you.
- Do not be afraid to ask additional questions at any time.

### Disease management

- Management of your condition is essential if you are going to fast successfully for an extended period.
- Recognise warning symptoms of low blood sugar, dehydration and other possible complications.

### Seek medical assistance

- At the first sign of any complications you must stop fasting and seek medical advice and assistance. Your GP or Practice Nurse will know you are fasting and be on hand.

### A few points on diet

It is understood and recognised that eating a variety of food in the correct quantities will lead to a balanced diet. This is particularly true during extended periods of fasting. To keep healthy, food should be chosen from the major food groups: bread and cereal, milk and dairy products, meat and beans, vegetables and fruits.

Slow energy release foods (known as complex carbohydrates) are the best things to eat before and after a daily period of fasting. Foods such as grains, wheat, semolina, beans and rice provide energy for up to 8 hours. Quick energy release foods (known as refined carbohydrates eg. biscuits, pastries) with a lot of sugar or white flour only last for 3-4 hours.

### After fasting

When you have finished fasting you must go and see your GP/Practice Nurse for a full assessment of how fasting has affected you and for advice on returning to your usual eating and medication regime.