

operation. This usually takes place around 6 weeks after the operation. At this visit, we can advise you further depending on your recovery from the operation and your underlying heart condition.

## I am pregnant and have congenital heart disease, can I fast?

If you are pregnant and have complex congenital heart disease, you are exempt from fasting. If you fast, you could put yourself and your unborn child at risk. Remember that you can complete your duties by offering charity or feeding the poor.

## What should I eat during Ramadan?

At Suhoor (sehri) you should eat starchy carbohydrates which release energy slowly, such as pitta bread, chapattis, rice, semolina and cereals (oats/Weetabix etc.). Eat these with fruit and vegetables, and remember to drink plenty of water.

At Iftar time, eat a well-balanced meal with complex carbohydrates and fruits/vegetables. Avoid deep-fried and fast burning foods such as cakes, mithai, samosas, pakoras etc. These foods provide less nutritional value which is vital during the long fastings at this time of year.

**Ensure you drink plenty of water.**

## If I feel unwell and experience symptoms during Ramadan, what should I do?

If you start to experience symptoms such as chest pain, breathlessness, dizziness, headaches and collapse, you should break your fast immediately. If the symptoms do not settle or you are concerned, contact your GP or the ACHD nurse specialist for advice.

This leaflet is not exhaustive in the details it provides regarding fasting and congenital heart disease. Please ask your doctor/nurse if you are unsure.

## Useful links

**Muslim Council of Great Britain**  
[www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk)

## Contact details

**ACHD Nurse Specialist**  
Tel: 07768 801 095  
Email: [achdnurses@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:achdnurses@uhb.nhs.uk)



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit [www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm) or call 0121 371 4323.

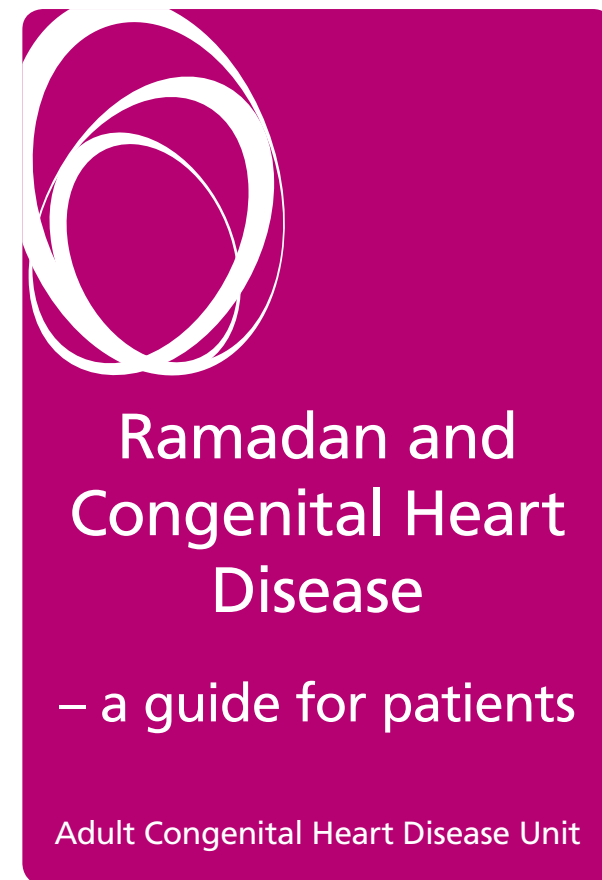
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**Adult Congenital Heart Disease Unit**  
**Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham**  
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston  
Birmingham, B15 2GW  
Telephone: 0121 627 2000

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**University Hospitals Birmingham**  
NHS Foundation Trust



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Fasting in Ramadan requires complete abstinence from food from dawn to dusk. It is a wonderful opportunity to cleanse out bodies and souls and practice self-restraint. Although necessary on people who are healthy, fasting can be dangerous or cause health problems for some people with heart conditions. It is clearly stated in the Quran (chapter 2, verse 184) that an illness or medical condition of any kind that makes fasting injurious to a person's health makes them exempt from fasting.

Whilst we appreciate that fasting is a personal decision, this leaflet has been created to help answer common questions regarding congenital heart disease and fasting. Before you decide to fast, please read the advice below and talk to the doctor/nurse in clinic.

## What happens to the body during fasting

During a fast, our bodies will first use glucose (sugars) for energy. After around 8 hours, these will run out and our bodies will use fat. This can result in hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) especially in people who are diabetic. This can also leave people feeling tired and weak. Additionally, the long summer days means people are fasting for up to 18 hours and are therefore at risk of dehydration.

## How do I know if I can fast with my heart condition?

If you have any of the conditions outlined below, we would advise you against fasting as you will be more prone to becoming unwell or collapsing as a result of dehydration. People with such potential health consequences are exempt from fasting. Remember that you can complete your duties by offering charity or feeding the poor. If you are unsure, ask your doctor or clinical nurse specialist.

### Conditions in which fasting is not advised;

- Fontan circulation (see point 3 below)
- Mustard/Senning repair
- Cyanotic congenital heart disease (low oxygen levels)
- Pulmonary hypertension (raised blood pressure in the lungs)
- Severe narrowing of valve
- Pregnancy and complex congenital heart disease (see point 7 below)
- Ongoing symptoms such as breathlessness, chest pain, dizziness, blackouts

## I have a Fontan circulation, can I fast?

People with a Fontan circulation are particularly prone to becoming dangerously unwell or collapsing as a result of dehydration. People who are at risk from such health problems are exempt

from fasting. Remember that you can complete your duties by offering charity or feeding the poor.

## My heart condition is not listed above, can I fast?

This list is not exhaustive but does highlight the conditions in which we would advise you not to fast. There have been no studies looking at the effect of fasting in people born with congenital heart disease. We are using our experience and knowledge of congenital heart disease to identify those patients who we feel are at most risk of fasting during Ramadan. If you are unsure, check with your doctor or nurse specialist.

## I take regular medication during the day, can I fast?

It is very important that you continue to take prescribed medication during Ramadan. If you are prescribed medication which needs to be taken during the day, then you are exempt from fasting. In some cases, the timing of some medication can be altered to fit around the hours of fasting. You must speak to your doctor or specialist nurse before altering your tablets.

## I have had a recent heart operation, can I fast?

We would advise anybody undergoing open heart surgery to not fast until at least the first clinic visit following your