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# Bite into Wellness

YOUR BI-MONTHLY DOSE OF HEALTHY LIVING

## The Significance of Eating Dates During Ramadan

The Muslim holiday of Ramadan signifies a period of time in which the faithful undergo a spiritual purification over the course of a full month of fasting and prayer. Ramadan is celebrated during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and Muslims fast each day, from sunrise to sunset, in order to gain a higher level of spiritual enlightenment. It is believed that fasting promotes discipline and restraint of body, mind, and spirit, and that it serves as a way for Muslims to reflect upon the positive changes they would like to incorporate into their lives in the coming year. Adherence to the guidance of religious rituals and practices is expected during the holiday, and the faithful typically devote five times a day to prayer. Ramadan reaches its conclusion with Eid or Eid al-Fitr; a three day holiday marking the end of the fasting period. At this point, families gather together in order to celebrate, and to perform charitable acts for the benefit those in need

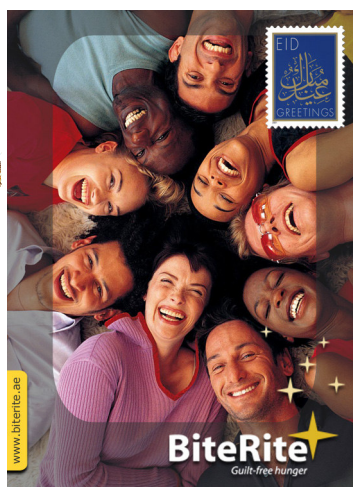
The tradition of eating dates during Ramadan, in order to break the fast at the end of each day, spans the course of history back to the time of the Prophet Mohammed, and it is noted in various religious texts and literature. It is widely believed that Mohammed would customarily end his own fast



with dates and water, and therefore, dates hold a high degree of spiritual significance for the people of the Muslim faith.

Naturally, a depletion of energy is experienced as a result of fasting, particularly due to low blood glucose levels, and consuming dates is thought to be a gentle way in which to ease the body back into the act of eating. Dates are typically eaten before Iftar, the meal partaken of in the evening after sunset, and during Sahuur, the light meal enjoyed before the fast begins for the day. Dates are high in natural sugars and fiber, and rich in vitamins and minerals such as iron, potassium, magnesium, and calcium. Therefore, they are considered to prevent metabolic, digestive, and other physical problems that might be caused by the practice of fasting.

Source: <http://www.associatedcontent.com/>



product of the month

Tabbouleh تبولة



This is a Levantine and Iraqi salad dish of Lebanese origin. Traditionally a mountain dish from the Eastern Mediterranean, it has become one of the most popular Middle Eastern salads.

Try our version using choice ingredients like finely chopped parsley, whole wheat bulgur, ripe tomatoes, and spring onion with lemon juice and olive oil.

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# HEALTHY EATING, HEALTHY LIVING



## nutrition & lifestyle:

### TEN Important Points to Consider

#### 1. Maintain A Healthy Weight

If you are overweight then losing even a small amount of weight can have dramatic effects in helping to control your blood sugar and overall health. You should aim for the OK range on the BMI chart. If this is not practical or achievable, aim for 10% weight loss. This would benefit your health and make your diabetes easier to control. Ever see the top 10 lists for foods everyone should eat to superpower your diet? Ever wonder which will mesh with your diabetes meal plan? Wonder no more . . . your list of the top 10 diabetes super foods has arrived.

#### 2. Eat Regularly

It is important that you eat regularly, which in turn should remind you to take your medication regularly. At a minimum this would mean breakfast, lunch and your evening meal. Some people may be encouraged to have snacks between meals. People, who eat small meals/snacks frequently, tend to have better blood sugar control.

#### 3. Include Slowly Absorbed Starchy Foods

Eat plenty of slowly absorbed starchy foods - some foods such as oats, beans, dhal and pulses can help control your blood sugar. Do not cut down on starchy foods such as, bread, chapatti, rice, pasta and potatoes. Many people believe that if you have diabetes, you should eat less of these foods. That is not the case, you should carry on enjoying these foods in the amounts you currently eat them.

#### 4. Fruit & Vegetables

Try to include vegetables and fresh fruit at each of your meals - this is important in trying to protect your heart. Aim for 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day, these can be fresh, frozen or tinned.

#### 5. Cut Down On Fat

Cutting down on the fat in your food will help protect your heart. Replace high saturated fat sources with mono-unsaturated fat sources. Your dietitian can advise you about this.

#### Why cut down on Fat?

Probably the most important thing you should do is to try to cut down on your fat and oil intake. Two of the major aims of the diet are to reduce the risk of heart disease and reduce your weight. Fats and oils (no matter what

kind) in large amounts are bad for your heart. The general message is to eat less of these. They are also very high in energy so, reducing your use of fats and oils will help you lose weight.

#### Which foods are high in fat?

There are visible fats - the fat that you can see in or on foods, such as cooking oils, which also includes all the vegetable oils, ghee, lard, butter margarine, meat fat and dripping.

#### Hidden Fats

Also there are foods that have hidden fats, such as, biscuits, where it is not obvious that the food is high in fat. In general, you should try and cut down on fried foods and snacks such as samosas, and high fat foods that come from 'Take Away' or convenience meals. You should try and remove the fat from your meat, and perhaps use less butter, margarine, and ghee in your food.

#### Try a low fat spread instead

You should try and encourage your family to move from using full fat milk to a lower fat milk, such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk and reduce the amount of cheese that you eat. Make yoghurt using skimmed milk or buy low fat types. Cream and chocolate covered biscuits and cakes should only be eaten on occasions, as should pies and pastries.

#### 6. Cut Down on Sugar

Cutting down on the amount of sugar you eat will make your blood sugar easier to control.

#### 7. Cut down on Sweetened Beverages

Choose water and diet soft drinks as your preferred beverage when you are thirsty. If you are going to drink a fruit juice, choose one that is made from 100% fresh juice such as a 1/2 cup of apple or carrot juice.

#### 8. Include Oily Fish

All fish is very good for you, and there is evidence to suggest that oily fish such as salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel, and herring, have a positive effect on the health of your heart. Aim for at least 1-2 portions of oily fish per week.

#### 9. Cut Down on Salt

Cutting down on your salt intake will help to control your blood pressure. Try substituting other herbs and spices instead.

#### 10. Keep Active

Try to include some regular exercise in your daily routine. Keeping active can help strengthen your heart as well as:

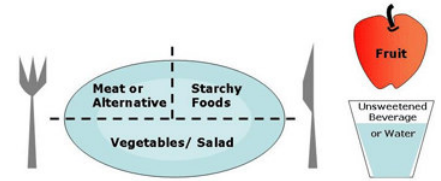
- Help maintain an ideal body weight
- Decrease blood fats
- Decrease blood pressure

**NB: It might be advisable to speak to your Doctor before you start any exercise regime, remember to start gently and gradually increase the amount you do.**

These ten points can be summarized by imagining a plate. At meal times most peoples' plates consist of large portions of meat, fish or eggs. These high fat foods often cover half of the plate, leaving very little room for vegetables and fruit and starchy foods such as potatoes, rice, pasta, chapattis and yam.

#### HEALTHY 'BALANCED' MEAL

We recommend that the amount of vegetables and fruit are increased in your meal and that the amount of meat, fish and eggs is reduced so that they make up the smallest portion of food on your plate. In this way the fatty foods you eat are reduced.



Changing the proportions of food in this way leads to a healthier meal.



## on going promotions

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#### Benefits:

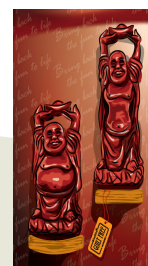
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