



Ramadaan – Rejuvenating Mind, Body and Soul

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Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said, “The stomach is the home of disease and abstinence the head of every remedy, so make this your custom.”

Fasting in some or other form is central to most religious doctrines. Mankind has always been aware of the benefits of limiting food intake for the preservation of health, with fasting being the oldest known form of natural healing. The Islamic month of fasting, Ramadaan, is a period of reflection and restoration not only for the body, but for spiritual and emotional organisation as well. It is a time of deeper consciousness where we practice self-restraint, appreciate our blessings and remember those less fortunate.

Tibb, which has its roots in prophetic medicine, advocates fasting on a regular basis as a means for the body to reorganize itself, thereby promoting a renewed sense of well-being. Fasting is a vital way to clear unnecessary toxins from the systems as it gives the body time to reorganize itself. It is essential to good elimination, one of Tibb’s Six Lifestyle Factors.

Elimination refers to the process of detoxification of waste from the body. Hippocrates, one of the fathers of Tibb, believed that the body takes from the environment whatever it needs for energy and survival. What is not needed is expelled back into the environment in the form of waste. There are two types of elimination in Tibb philosophy- Natural and Induced:

Natural Elimination: refers to the natural function of the body to rid itself of waste matter by means of gases, respiration, passing of urine and stool, menstruation and perspiration. Other forms of elimination that may sometimes be vital to the body include sneezing, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, hiccoughs, earwax, discharges from the eyes and so forth.

Natural elimination is not only restricted to bodily functions. Emotions such as anger, worry, fear, excitement and grief all play a vital role in the process of healthy natural elimination. Often illness conditions arise when natural elimination may be curbed for some or other reason.

Induced Elimination: is often a treatment used by Tibb practitioners when there is a build-up of toxins in the body and waste matter is not effectively eliminated by the body’s natural action. It may include the use of cupping, diuretics, massage, saunas, steam baths, laxatives and of course, fasting.

On a psychological and spiritual level, induced elimination would be effected through counselling, meditation, breathing and physical exercise.

Tibb believes that each person has an internal 'doctor', an innate ability to deal with illness and restore good health. This inherent wisdom is called 'physis'. Physis works optimally when the rest of the body is not under undue strain through actions such as stress and even constant digestion. Therefore, when we fast, we allow ourselves much needed time to repair and restore. This is one of the reasons why people often experience headaches, cramps and fatigue during the first week of Ramadaan. These symptoms are indicators that the body is ridding itself of toxins, and trying to restore its faculties.

Following a healthy diet during the fasting period can have further health benefits, specifically with regards to colon-related illnesses, irregular blood sugar levels, cholesterol and skin disorders. Research has shown that controlled fasting strengthens the organs and lessens symptoms in patients with chronic conditions. Ramadaan is an ideal time to take advantage of these benefits, especially if endeavours are made to uphold these good habits consistently.

Follow the advice below to ensure that your Ramadaan will be a time of health restoration:

- Eat easily digestible foods such as fruit and vegetables with meat and fish in moderation.
- Use natural digestive aids such as ginger, cumin, cinnamon and cardamom in your food.
- Drink peppermint and green tea after your meal.
- Break your fast with a small meal and eat slowly. Snack on a light, nutritious meal later in the evening to maintain your strength.
- Drink warm milk flavoured with almonds and fennel before retiring. Avoid excessive cold drinks.
- Follow in the example of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and eat dates. The slow release of energy found in dates, as well as the high fibre content make them a most suitable fruit to add to your diet.
- Add a pinch of cumin or honey to yoghurt and eat at the time of fast breaking.
- Do not eat fried foods in excess.
- Eat rice, and limit bread intake. Rice digests more easily.
- Have a banana at the time of Sehri.
- Do not go straight back to sleep after Sehri, but rather allow some time for your food to digest by praying and meditating.
- A short walk after your evening meal is advisable and most beneficial.
- Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water, 2 of which must be taken immediately upon waking for Sehri.

Staying positive and accepting the fast as a time of self-healing and spiritual growth will also add to the benefits of your fasting experience. Make your home a haven of peace, prayer and tranquillity.

Remember that fasting on an ongoing basis throughout the year, will give your body, mind and soul a chance to be continuously revitalized. Above all, take heed that everything in moderation is always the safest way to err on the side of caution. God-Willing, may you have a healthy and blessed Ramadaan!