

HOROSCOPE



ARIES
(MAR. 21-APRIL 20)

New projects may not end well. Sudden romantic infatuations won't last. Start planning that vacation. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Your quick wit will help in obtaining allies. Do your work diligently. Debates could result in estrangement. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUNE 21)

Your charm will be captivating. Make changes around your house. Don't let anyone take you for granted. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



CANCER
(JUNE 22-JULY 22)

You're in the mood to spend money. Look into ways to spoil yourself. Avoid those with overly strong convictions. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



LEO
(JULY 23-AUG 22)

Avoid ranting and raving. Look into joint financial investments. Spend a day out with family. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEPT. 23)

Don't let your partner manipulate you. Deal with the needs of children. Someone could try to undermine you. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



LIBRA
(SEPT. 24-OCT. 23)

Past partners may try to come back into your life. Your mind will be wandering. Be creative in your pursuits. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Travel could be exciting. Older relatives could cause trouble. Organise your time to be more efficient. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Someone you live with may be irritable. Finish up any pending correspondence. Children's needs could be costly. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Do research before taking on any venture. End any ongoing disputes. Loss is evident if you aren't careful. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Avoid expanding your business. Helping children may be rewarding. Taking on too much won't help the situation. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



PISCES
(FEB. 20-MARCH. 20)

Changes in position could be better than you thought. Romance is likely in large social gatherings. Go out with loved ones. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



A NOTE ON NUTRITION

CHOWDHURY TASNEEM HASIN
Chief Dietician, United Hospital Ltd.
Organizational and Press Secretary,
Association of Nutritionist and
Dieticians (AND)



Ramadan calling!

Fasting is an essential part of faith in innumerable religions spread across the world. Yet, the fundamental difference between fasting in Islam and other beliefs is that the one prescribed in the sacred book of Islam ensures that although abstinence is there, the permitted period of food consumption guarantees that there is no real chance of malnutrition or inadequate calorie intake.

HOW DIFFERENT IS ISLAMIC FASTING?

The basic difference between abstinence in Ramadan and total fasting is the timing of the intake of food. We basically miss lunch, have an early breakfast and do not eat until dusk. Nothing more.

Even the insufficient supply of water, which is essential for human survival, does not have an adverse impact — it adjusts the concentration of all fluids within the body, resulting only in a nominal state of dehydration, which itself has beneficial effects.

As the fast only lasts between dawn and dusk, the body's energy can be replaced in the pre-dawn (sehri) and dusk (iftar) meals. This results in a slow transition from using glucose to fat as the main source of energy, and prevents the breakdown of muscles for protein.

OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

One of the five pillars on which the monotheistic religion of Islam stands upon, fasting is primarily a religious obligation and a spiritual experience. Yet, the design of a month-long fast makes it clear that Islam is pragmatic even in its obligatory duties.

While fasting is ordained for all Muslims, it is not obligatory for the elderly, the young or the ill, and people suffering from some other clinical, or non-clinical circumstances. From a nutritional point of view, fasting in the month of Ramadan is not a burden, but rather, a manner of reaping physical and, as research shows, even psychological benefits. This, as many claim, is proof that Islam

is a pragmatic religion that addresses the realities and more.

THE SCIENCE

To maintain a healthy life, every human being needs a certain number of calories, which differs from person to person. While it is true that generally during Ramadan the body is somewhat deprived of its total calorie count, any form of short fast, lasting anywhere from 20 to 36 hours, can in fact, reduce risks for heart disease, diabetes, and possibly, even cancer!

The changes that occur in the body depend on the duration of the fast. In the month of Ramadan, for a practicing Muslim, the body enters into a deprived state for approximately eight hours. In a normal person, body glucose, which is stored in the liver and muscles, is the body's main source of energy. While fasting, this store of glucose is used up first to provide energy. Once the body runs out of the stored glucose, it starts using up from the fat reserve.

Short fasts also reduce oxidative stress and inflammation in cells. Many theorise that this helps prevent and even repair damage to our DNA; studies have linked damage to the DNA with developing cancer.

Scientists also have strong arguments for fasting as an anti-ageing method. In other words, fasting just may help us keep our organs health and this prolonging life.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

THE BODY

The kidneys, our primary excretory organ, are efficient at maintaining the body's water and salts, such as sodium and potassium. To aid in the proper functioning of the kidneys, and to prevent breakdown of muscle, we should maintain a balanced diet with the right proportion of carbohydrates, fat and protein.

The physiological effect of fasting includes lowering blood sugar level, cutting on cholesterol, and moderating systolic blood pressure. In fact, fasting

can be recommended for treating mild to moderate, stable, non-insulin diabetes, obesity, and hypertension.

The benefits however do not stop there — fasting has been proven to be beneficial for the gut and aid in curing or managing chronic stomachache, inflammation of the colon, liver diseases, and indigestion.

Other major benefits that can be linked with the Islamic way of fasting in Ramadan are arteriosclerosis, hypertension, asthma, even diphtheria!

THE MIND

Fasting has been found to be an effective treatment for psychological and emotional disorders. It helps people build self-esteem and a strong will, cultivate and refine their taste and manners, and strengthen convictions, which ultimately all contribute towards a sound and healthy lifestyle.

Besides conditioning for abstinence, fasting also reflects on outward physical appearance by help cutting out gluttony, and getting rid of excess fat, which, in today's world, is a major medical issue.

DETOX

One common term that gets thrown around is 'detox'. However, only a few have a clear idea about what detox actually refers to, and how Ramadan can be linked with it.

Detoxification is one of the more widely used treatments based on the principle that health can be hampered if toxin (toxic substance) becomes high in the bloodstream. Detoxification takes place when any toxins in the body's fat reserve are dissolved and removed from the body.

After a few days of fasting, higher levels of endorphins (a hormone) appear in the blood, which, without us even realizing, make people alert, giving an overall feeling of mental wellbeing.

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed/Shazia Omar-Yogilates