

# What happens inside our bodies WHEN WE'RE FASTING?

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For younger people, Ramadan rarely arrives during a pause in life. It arrives in the middle of exams, tuition classes, late-night study sessions, or work. Unlike adults with stable routines, students are often running on tight schedules and irregular sleeping routines. Between commuting and cramming classes before iftar time, there's often a brief buffer period before easing into the routine of Ramadan.

By the time the Fajr adhan fades and we crawl back into bed, most of us aren't thinking about metabolism, insulin, or glycogen stores. We're thinking about unfinished assignments, early classes, and whether we'll survive the morning grogginess without caffeine.

But while we go about our day, attending lectures, flipping through notes, and fighting off sleep, something far more fascinating is unfolding quietly inside us.

That slightly disorienting sensation is not random. It signals a cascade of metabolic adjustments as the body recalibrates to a sudden change in daily habits. On the first day of fasting, our systems enter adjustment mode. As blood glucose levels drop and stored energy reserves are gradually depleted, students may feel the change almost immediately. The effects of this may include a heaviness behind the eyes, a slower response in class, or a dip in stamina that wasn't there the night before.

Young people often experience fasting differently, not because they're weaker, but because days demand more of them. The developing brain consumes substantial glucose, metabolic rates tend to be faster, and many adolescents are still growing. When fasting begins, all the simultaneous internal reactions can make the initial slump feel more pronounced. It's not just physical activity and intense

workload. Ongoing growth and hormonal development also demand high energy.

By the third day, the body starts settling into the flow of fasting. Digestion slows, giving the system a healthy break, while energy is gently redirected toward repair and maintenance. Fat gradually becomes the main fuel, replacing the glucose that has already been used up. Subtle changes may also emerge, like a few stubborn pimples, mild muscle aches, or heaviness in muscles.

All this can feel strange at first. Younger people notice it in their skin, while others notice a little stiffness in their legs after walking around campus. These shifts are part of the cleansing through fasting, clearing out what it doesn't need and preparing for the steadier energy that comes later in the week. Amid these changes, focus often begins to sharpen, and a clear-headed calm starts to creep in, even if the afternoons still feel a little heavier than usual.

Not only are the effects felt during the fast, but there's also a magnetic pull towards post-iftar naps during Ramadan. Stuffing ourselves with heaps of carbohydrates, fatty fried fritters, and sugary beverages results in an immediate trigger of insulin release, blood sugar regulation, and digestion. Blood flow to the digestive system increases, and what follows is often called a food coma. The sudden surge of drowsiness that envelopes us after eating is a result of that, and this is part of the reason why we're usually advised to stick to lighter eating.

Sehri proves to be a daunting task for many, especially for school and university students. The world is still half-asleep, the streets are quiet, and the bed seems impossible to leave. It arrives like an uninvited guest at dusk, demanding carbs, eggs, and water before anyone has fully opened their eyes. Skipping it seems tempting, but it's

the one meal that can keep the brain sharp and the energy from crashing before iftar. What we eat during sehri sets the tone for the remainder of the day, so it's important to be mindful of what not to eat as well.

By the second week, fasting starts to feel steadier. The body begins to adjust: fat quietly replaces the sugar that ran out in the first days, like a backup generator slowly kicking in. Blood sugar rises and falls more gently, and doesn't play tug-of-war with focus as it did before. Old aches or lingering soreness surface at times, like creaky hinges being oiled, as tissues repair and inflammation calms. Thoughts sharpen, tasks feel easier to complete, and even the afternoons don't drag as much. The body quietly learns to do more with less, like a well-tuned machine getting used to new fuel.

Though chaotic at first, the month of Ramadan shifts life into a stable routine that leaves one feeling empty once it's over. The calculation of rushing from classes to arrive home before sunset, the impromptu iftar plans with friends, and the spiritual atmosphere bring about a tangible tranquility. Beneath these rhythms, the body gradually learns to manage energy, repair itself, and sharpen the mind. What begins as fatigue and distraction slowly transform into clarity, calm, and endurance.

#### References:

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