

## Exercise during Ramadan fasting

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### Introduction and background.

It is known that physical activity influences health benefits for individuals in this modern era more than in previous ones. Because this era is characterized by technologies that are comfortable for the human body. Luxury is the prevailing characteristic, and this is due to the use of technological means of movement and the use of comfortable means of transportation. This makes the person inactive, affects his body posture, and suffering from psychological, physical, and social pain. (Kilani, 2013) It is necessary to take care of this body nutritionally, psychologically, socially, and physically, as the Noble Messenger emphasized that “the body” is one of the rights that a Muslim must take care of, and he said in that regard, “Indeed, your Lord has a right over you, and your body has a right over you, so give each his right.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

If this indicates anything, it indicates Islam’s interest in the balance of the human organs, spiritually and physically. It is worth noting that studies and content analysis of the Holy Qur’an showed that 29 Qur’anic verses mentioned the word “power, force” and that 10 verses mentioned the word “powers, forces.” Here, the Almighty’s saying must be mentioned.

“And prepare against them whatever force you are able, and of the strength of your horses, that you may terrify the enemy of God and your enemy with it.” (Al-Anfal 60). The verse commands Muslims to arm themselves with weapons of force of all types and types, muscular, psychological, and material. In order to be physically prepared by force, there must be physical and spiritual training that is codified by faith, through which the body develops, becomes stronger, active, and strong. This is what we saw in the Islamic resistance of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. (Al-Aqsa Flood, 2023) Islam also has a developed concept regarding physical activity. It was not limited to using force to confront enemies in war, but rather it went beyond that to paying attention to a beautiful figure, developing one’s abilities, and building a

healthy body. God Almighty says in Surat Al-Infitar: O man, what has deceived you about your Most Gracious Lord (6). (7) He who created you, fashioned you, and made you equal (7) He created you in whatever form He wished.

As God Almighty made clear, He chose a man for the kingdom from among those people who possessed physical strength and breadth of knowledge, so His Majesty said, “And their Prophet said to them, ‘Indeed, God has sent to you Talut as a king.’ They said, ‘How can he have kingship over us, when we are more deserving of the kingdom than him,’ and he was not given an abundance of money?” He said, “God has sent you a king.” He chose him over you and increased him abundantly in knowledge and body.” (Al-Baqarah 247)

Analysis and references also indicate that our master Muhammad, the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, directed the attention of Muslims to gaining and maintaining strength in six hadiths, including: “A strong believer is better and more beloved to God than a weak believer.” and he said, “Take advantage of five before five of them,” “Your health before your illness, and your youth comes before your old age...”

It is known that health and youth are maintained by physical activity and sport exercises that strengthen the body and give it the immunity necessary to prolong the period of youth during which the believer is stronger than any other period.

There is a hadith that emphasizes preserving the strength and skill that a person has acquired, as the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: “Whoever learns archery and then abandons it is a sinner.”

Scientists and researchers have worked hard to describe the relationship of some Islamic pillars, such as prayer, Hajj, and fasting, to exercise. Islamic legislation related to public health also indicates Islam’s interest in the body, preventing illnesses, and preserving it from diseases. Sports activities also appeared that the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, encouraged people to practice few events in sport. He also practiced some of them, and we mention among them races of all kinds, equestrianism, throwing, wrestling, swimming, hunting, and fencing. All of these activities are similar, in essence or in form, to many of the sports and physical activities currently practiced, and it has not been mentioned in any incident or situation that there was a cessation of physical activities, even in the holy month of Ramadan.

## The importance of Ramadan, fasting and strength

Fasting means abstinence from everything, such as food, drink, and sex. Ramadan fasting means withholding the soul from desires and modifying its sensual power by abandoning the obvious things that break the fast, such as food, water, smoking, and sexual intercourse, from dawn until the moment of sunset. Fasting was imposed on Muslims in the second year of the Hijra with the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and by saying: God Almighty: "O you who have believed, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you that you may become righteous" (Al-Baqarah).

Therefore, it is the month of worship and sports activities were never among the things that break the fast that disrupt worship. Rather, fasting means doing work while fasting, not sleeping, and inaction from work. Prayer is the mainstay of fasting. The fasting person works, worships, prays Tarawih prayers, stays up all night, and reads the Qur'an. Human must take care of his body to be strong, and He will not be strong except through training and movement, which strengthens his patience and adapts his core. The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: "A strong believer is better and more beloved to God than a weak believer, and there is good in everything. Be careful what benefit you, and seek the help of God does not fail." (Narrated by Muslim).

Fasting is an exercise, psychological worship, and practical behavior to curb desires, and training and habituation in regulating the pleasure of eating during the night. Sports training prepares the individual with the strength and resilience to perform his fasting, prayer, and night prayers with strength and fortitude, so worship is complete, emulating the Almighty's saying: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship me."

Ramadan is in which the Noble Qur'an was revealed. God Almighty said: "The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind." On Laylat al-Qadr, which is better than a thousand months, Muslims must be active in this blessed night more than any other, seeking it and wanting to encounter it. The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, used to seclude the last ten days of Ramadan, and seclusion itself requires both physical and spiritual strength to perform the religious obligations in an integrated manner. Let us not forget that the month of Ramadan is the month of victory for Muslims, as the Great Battle of Badr, which was called the Criterion, took place in it. The conquest of

Mecca was that most glorious day, when the Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace, entered Mecca in an unparalleled way, as he entered the Sacred Mosque and destroyed the idols that were above and surrounding it, and began stabbing them with a rod in his hand, and a lump fell on her face while he recited the words of God Almighty, “And say, “The truth has come and falsehood has perished. Indeed, falsehood has vanished” (Al-Isra’, verse 81).

### **Health and physical benefits of fasting**

There is no difference in the fact that fasting is one of the medical prescriptions through which many diseases are treated. Fasting has many benefits, especially if the cause of these diseases is overeating. Excessive food spoils the stomach and weakens the body, especially if the person is not athletic or inactive, as the food coming in is greater than the food coming out, which disrupts the body’s vitality.

Food in excess of the body's need is stored as fat and grease, which the body does not need in many cases, but rather causes atherosclerosis and exposure to heart disease. Fasting is a diet of worship for the soul and body, and true fasting does not mean eating excessively at sunset or at suhoor. Early results have found that some types of fasting may have positive effects on health aspects such as blood sugar control, blood pressure, and inflammation. But fasting can cause weight loss, too.(Kilani, 2015) Fasting can induce autophagy by stressing your cells to send them into survival mode. In the case of autophagy, the cell essentially eats itself in order to survive. The bonus is that this survival process can lead to cells that function more efficiently. True fasting does not mean eating excessively at Maghreb or at Suhoor. He said: God Almighty: “Eat and drink, and do not be extravagant. Indeed, He does not like the extravagant.” He, may God bless him and grant him peace, said “We are a people who do not eat until we are hungry, and if we eat we are not satisfied.”

Fasting has an effective effect on the psychological aspect of a person, as it inspires reassurance, patience, and calm, and this in itself is a prevention and treatment of anxiety and psychological disorders.

Modern medicine also confirms that a decrease in fatty substances to an acceptable extent reduces the level of cholesterol in food, and this is more evident in those who are fasting than in others. Fasting against smoking is the first tool to confront these unhealthy behavioral habits through fasting and practicing sports activities. The scientific truth is absent from many people who believe that fasting increases the level of daily scientific production, whether physical or intellectual. This is contrary to what is

rumoured in the West about the decline in productivity during fasting. If we want to analyse this scientifically, the fasting person fulfils his structural and energy needs during Maghrib and Suhoor, and when the fasting person follows some scientific, physical and health guidelines, his efficiency and vitality increases during fasting, in contrast to what he feels when the stomach is full of lethargy and inaction. Blood is distributed to the muscles working during motor activity at a rate of 85% of its volume, but This percentage quickly changes and is affected when the stomach is filled with food, which reduces the efficiency of muscle work and makes the person feel sleepy and lethargic. (Al-Nawaiseh,2021) We are nourished by our mind and body during movement and activity. Our blood has a much greater blood distribution rate than when we are sitting and inactive. For example, the brain during rest needs about 0.9 liters of blood, while it needs 1.2 liters of blood expelled during exercise. As for the muscles, they need 4 liters. of blood at rest, while you need 25.5 liters during physical activity. (Gonzalez-Alonso, et al 2004, Bada, et al 2012)

Fasting does not reduce the rate of blood circulation and blood supply to a person, but rather the liver and muscles work to adapt to expand energy stores during fasting, so the body fills and expands those stores from “glycogen,” the sugar stored in the muscles and liver to be used during fasting to provide the muscles with the energy needed to produce movement.

The brain will also not be affected by the decrease in the percentage of sugar that reaches the brain, which is constant whether during breakfast, during fasting, or even during starvation.( Dalsgaard *et al.* 2002) The body is able to produce sugar from starch stores in the liver and convert some sources of fat and protein into sugar in the liver to supply the brain with glucose, and it will not lack energy. The body is able to maintain the same ratio, and sports activity increases the body’s production of those metabolic processes that help raise the efficiency and vitality of the body during fasting.

### **How to exercise while fasting**

Since the weather is moderate in the month of Ramadan in Amman this year, exercising in the morning has its benefits, especially if the training is strong and intense, because energy production in this case comes from substances stored in the muscle, such as adenosine triphosphate and creatine phosphate, and the exercises that we recommend have low repetitions. The intensity is high and the rest period is simple, two to three minutes between each set of exercises. Thus, the body has benefited from

the phosphagen reserve to produce energy, which is replaced during rest, and the level of glucose or starch will not be affected as a reserve for the rest of the day.

However, if training is delayed until the noon, we advise that the “trainee” player rely on a little longer training, without the need for the chemical presence of oxygen. Thus, catabolism is incomplete and lactic acid precipitates, which leads to fatigue. The athlete is given a sufficient period of rest during which he can practice some stretching exercises to restore recovery and convert lactic acid into glucose that can be used to maintain blood sugar levels. Thus, the athlete feels active and energetic after exercise.

If training is delayed until before sunset, we recommend that training be done at a moderate intensity level to allow for the use of energy from fat, which is abundant in the body in adipose tissue, which qualifies the athlete to produce a long workout at a moderate intensity level. If the athlete has drained water from his cells, he can replace it at the moment of breaking the fast. This is one of the Sunnahs of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace. He said: “If one of you breaks the fast, let him break his fast with water, for it is purification.”

Also, eating dates after drinking water alerts the stomach to prepare to receive lunch, and therefore the athlete or person who is fasting can feel energetic.

When the time for breaking the fast approaches, the fasting person may feel extremely thirsty, and this is necessary to be patient with, because as we mentioned, patience in itself is a psychological and physical training. Balance will quickly return to the body at the moment of breaking the fast. Hence, it is necessary to point out the importance of food and meals and the relationship of this to sports activity and prayer, especially Tarawih prayer. It is recommended to exercise three hours after breakfast for all athletes

#### Suitable food after fasting

Dates have more than forty benefits for the body and are a complete food. Mary when she gave birth to our Prophet Jesus (so he called to her from beneath her: “Do not be sad. Your Lord has put under you a secret.” (24) And the trunk of the palm tree was moved to you, and it will drop on you dates (25). And milk, which was the choice of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, when he was taken on the journey from the Sacred Masjed to the Al-Aqsa Masjed. Gabriel gave him a cup of wine and a cup of milk, so the Messenger, may God bless him and grant

him peace, chose milk. Gabriel said to him, “You have chosen Fitrah (nature): dates and milk relax the nerves, strengthen the human soul, and add tranquillity and gentleness to anxious souls. What is better than that meal, a pre-dawn meal with honey added to it?”

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