

**BALANCED BLOOD SUGAR**



# RAMADAN GUIDE

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## WELCOME

An introduction to this guide and what you will gain from it. Also tips on how to prepare for a healthy, spiritually uplifting month.

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## TIPS FOR SUHOOR & IFTAR

Nutrition tips to help keep blood sugar levels steady while fasting and nutrients to consume to stay energized while fasting.

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## BLOOD SUGAR HACKS & GROCERY GUIDE

Science-based tips to help prevent blood sugar spikes during Ramadan and grocery guide to help maintain stable blood sugar levels, promote fullness and support overall health and well-being during Ramadan.



# Welcome

Blood sugar balance is crucial for overall health and well-being, not just for individuals with prediabetes or insulin resistance. Our blood sugar levels reflect our energy levels. Maintaining stable energy levels is even more critical when fasting. Stable blood sugar levels support better mental clarity and productivity, which will make for an easier fast.

In this guide, I share nutrient-dense foods that release energy slowly and will help to keep your blood sugar levels stable. I also provide lifestyle strategies to further support your blood sugar during the month of Ramadan. I hope you find this guide helpful!

Ramadan Kareem!

*Anar*







# Preperation

## KITCHEN ORGANIZATION

Taking time to clean your fridge and freezer and stocking your pantry is a great way to take inventory of what you have and what you need. To eliminate food waste, chose produce that has a longer life (including frozen produce). Check out the grocery list on page 10.

## CAFFEINE WITHDRAWAL

Start decreasing your coffee intake at least one to two weeks before Ramadan. This will give your body time to adapt and minimize withdrawal. If you usually have three cups of coffee, start by cutting back to two cups, then one cup, and eventually none. Stay hydrated to help mitigate any withdrawal symptoms such as headaches or fatigue. Consider using an electrolyte like LMNT, Biosteel or Liquid IV to help with withdrawal symptoms.

## PLAN YOUR MONTH

Ramadan is a month of connection and community. Connect with family and friends and spend time at the mosque to foster a sense of community. Do not overcommit yourself to avoid burnout or exhaustion. By pacing yourself and allowing time for rest, you can sustain your energy and enthusiasm throughout the Holy Month. This will also help reduce feelings of anxiety, irritability, and emotional fatigue often associated with fasting and busy schedules.

## HEALTH CHECK

If you have any pre-existing health conditions, consult with a healthcare professional to ensure that fasting is safe and appropriate for you and your health goals. Some medication adjustments might be needed.

## SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

Set personal goals for spiritual growth, self-improvement, and increased devotion. Establish a routine for reading and reflecting on the Quran, and participating in acts of charity and kindness.



# Suhoor (pre-dawn meal)

Suhoor is an opportunity to nourish yourself with essential nutrients and hydration to support balanced blood sugars, metabolic health, and overall well-being throughout the day. Prioritize a nutritious and balanced meal to optimize sustained energy levels while fasting.

## Sample Suhoor Meal Ideas:

- Oatmeal topped with berries, nuts, seeds and cinnamon
- Whole wheat toast with avocado and eggs
- Greek/Skyr yogurt parfait with berries, nuts, and a sprinkle of cinnamon
- Vegetable omelette with spinach, tomatoes, and feta cheese

**1. Protein Source:** Lean protein sources such as eggs, low-fat dairy products (Greek/Skyr yogurt, cottage cheese), tofu, legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans), and lean meats (chicken, turkey, seafood) are great protein sources. Protein helps in promoting fullness and satiety and helps stabilize blood sugar levels. Protein-rich foods slow down the digestion of carbohydrates, resulting in a gradual release of glucose into the bloodstream.

**2. Low Glycemic Carbohydrates:** Whole grains such as oats, barley, and whole wheat bread, provide slow-release carbohydrates owing to their high fibre content. Fibre-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts/seeds help slow down the absorption of glucose and prevent rapid spikes in blood sugar levels. Including fibre at Suhoor can help regulate blood sugar levels, promote feelings of fullness, and prevent constipation during fasting.

**3. Healthy Fats:** Incorporating sources of healthy fats such as avocados, nuts (almonds, walnuts, pistachios), seeds (chia seeds, flaxseeds), and olive oil can help increase the fullness factor and enhance the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. Including small amounts of healthy fats at Suhoor can help balance blood sugar levels and provide sustained energy throughout the fast.

**4. Hydration:** Fluids, especially water, during Suhoor help prevent dehydration and maintain fluid balance in the body. Protein shakes and electrolytes are hydrating too. Staying away from caffeinated and sugary beverages is encouraged as they can lead to increased urine and dehydration.



# Iftar (Sunset Meal)

Maintaining blood sugar balance when you break your fast is important. A balanced meal at iftar can energize you; an unbalanced meal may leave you feeling deflated. Here are several strategies you can implement to maintain better blood sugar balance:

## Iftar Portion Tips:

- Aim for 1/2 your plate to be veggies
- 1/4 of your plate protein
- 1/4 of your plate carbohydrate



- 1. Start with Hydration and Dates:** Begin Iftar with a few sips of water and have 1-2 dates. Dates provide a natural source of sugar and help raise blood sugar levels gradually.
- 2. Have a Veggie Starter:** A great way to nourish your body after a long day of fasting is to load up on vitamins, minerals, hydration and fibre. The fibre from the vegetables slows down the digestion and absorption of carbohydrates from the meal you are about to have. Think soups, salads, and roasted/sauteed veggies.
- 3. Avoid Sugary Beverages:** Limit your intake of sugary drinks such as sodas and fruit juices. Opt for water, herbal teas, or infused water to stay hydrated without added sugars.
- 4. Balanced Meal:** Aim for a balanced plate that includes a combination of **carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats**. This combination supports overall nutrition and helps prevent rapid blood sugar fluctuations. See the plate method above.
- 5. Limit Processed and Fried Foods:** Reduce intake of processed and fried foods, which may be high in unhealthy fats and contribute to rapid increases in blood sugar levels. If you choose to include fried food have it at the end of your meal and be mindful of portions.
- 6. Be Mindful:** Be present and attentive to the sensory experience of eating. Notice the colours, textures, flavours, and aromas of the foods you are having. Chew your food thoroughly. Eating slowly allows your body to properly digest the food and helps you recognize when you're starting to feel full. Pay attention to your body's fullness signals and stop eating when you start to feel satisfied.



# Exercise During Ramadan

## FOR BALANCED BLOOD SUGARS

When choosing appropriate exercise intensity and duration during Ramadan, consider your fitness level, health status, and individual preferences. Start with shorter durations and gradually increase intensity and duration as your body adjusts to fasting and exercise.

- **Choose the Right Timing:** Schedule your workouts during non-fasting hours. This allows you to replenish energy stores and stay hydrated before and after exercise.
- **Strength Train:** There is a risk of muscle loss due to reduced food intake and prolonged periods without nutrients. Strength training helps preserve muscle mass by stimulating muscle protein synthesis and preventing muscle breakdown, even in the absence of adequate food intake. 20 minutes a few times a week is a great way to preserve muscle mass. Use bodyweight exercises such as push-ups, squats and lunges. Adding weights and progressive overload is a great way to stimulate and grow muscle.
- **Be Consistent:** Aim for regularity and consistency in your exercise routine throughout Ramadan. Even short bouts of physical activity can offer health benefits and help maintain fitness levels during fasting periods.
- **Move After Meals:** Studies show that moving your body for at least 10-15 minutes after meals, such as taking a brisk walk or doing household chores improves insulin sensitivity, which allows cells to take up glucose more efficiently, reducing post-meal sugar spikes.





# Sleep During Ramadan

## FOR BALANCED BLOOD SUGARS

The change in routines, eating patterns, and lifestyle habits is a challenge. Ramadan is physically demanding, especially without proper rest. Sufficient rest helps your body conserve energy, regulate hormones, and maintain physical health while fasting. Sleep helps maintain focus and mental clarity which is usually affected by changes in blood sugar and sleep patterns in Ramadan. Here are some tips:

- **Consistent Sleep Schedule:** Aim to maintain a consistent sleep schedule by trying to go to bed and waking up at the same time each day. Consistency helps regulate your body's internal clock and promotes better sleep quality. Don't feel bad about declining social engagements to prioritize your rest. Fasting takes a toll on our bodies and making sure we have enough rest is crucial for our wellbeing and stress levels.
- **Sleep Hygiene:** Practice good sleep hygiene habits to create an optimal sleep environment. This includes keeping your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet, avoiding electronic devices before bedtime, and establishing a relaxing pre-sleep routine to unwind and prepare for rest.
- **Nap Wisely:** If you feel tired during the day, consider taking short naps (20-30 minutes) to recharge and boost alertness. Try to avoid long naps or napping too close to bedtime, as this may interfere with your ability to fall asleep at night.
- **Manage Stress and Relaxation:** Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or gentle stretching before bedtime to promote relaxation and reduce stress levels. Managing stress can help improve sleep quality and support blood sugar balance during Ramadan.
- **Optimize Nutrition:** Be mindful of food choices during Suhoor and Iftar. Avoid heavy, spicy, or rich foods close to bedtime, as they may cause discomfort or indigestion that interferes with sleep.





# Hydration During Ramadan

## FOR BALANCED BLOOD SUGARS

Hydration is important for blood sugar balance because it helps support overall metabolic function, fluid balance, and cellular hydration. Electrolytes are minerals such as sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium, which play essential roles in maintaining proper hydration, muscle function, nerve signalling, and overall fluid balance in the body.

**Taking electrolytes** during Ramadan can be beneficial since the risk of dehydration is high. Electrolytes help replenish lost minerals and maintain hydration levels. Look for electrolyte supplements that are free from added sugars and artificial ingredients. Try Liquid IV, Biosteel or LMNT. Do your best to include electrolyte foods and beverages listed below.

### Electrolyte-rich Foods and Drinks

- *Coconut water* is naturally rich in potassium, magnesium, and other electrolytes. Look for no added sugar varieties.
- *Dairy products*, especially milk, contain electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, and calcium, which play a role in maintaining fluid balance in the body.
- *Broths*: Vegetable or bone broths are excellent sources of electrolytes, including sodium, potassium, and magnesium.
- *Fruits and Veggies* have a high water content. They also contain natural sugars along with potassium, and vitamins that support hydration
- *Herbal teas* such as peppermint, chamomile, and ginger tea is hydrating and can be consumed without added sugars or sweeteners.
- *Infused water* with slices of citrus fruits (lemon, lime, orange), cucumber, mint leaves, or berries is a great way to add flavour and hydration without added sugars.







# Protein Powders

Protein powders can be a convenient and effective way to support protein intake especially if you struggle to meet your protein requirements with whole foods alone. A diet high in protein promotes satiety, supports muscle repair and recovery, and helps stabilize blood sugar levels throughout the day. Here are some tips on what to look for:

## 1. Type of Protein:

- Opt for high-quality protein sources that have minimal impact on blood sugar levels. Good options include whey protein, casein protein, pea protein, soy protein, and brown rice protein.
- Whey protein and casein protein are derived from dairy and are rich in essential amino acids. Pea protein, soy protein, and brown rice protein are plant-based alternatives suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

## 2. High Protein Content:

- Select protein powders with a high protein content per serving to help meet your daily protein requirements. Aim for products that provide at least 15-20 grams of protein per serving.

## 3. Minimal Added Sugars or Artificial Sweeteners:

- Avoid artificial sweeteners (such as sucralose or aspartame), or high-fructose corn syrup.
- Choose protein powders sweetened with natural sweeteners like stevia, monk fruit extract, or erythritol, or opt for unsweetened varieties.

## 4. Minimal Processing and Additives:

- Look for protein powders that are minimally processed and free from artificial additives, fillers, and preservatives.
- Avoid protein powders that contain artificial flavours, colours, or hydrogenated oils.



# Blood Sugar Hacks

Don't feel you need to stay away from your favourite foods to manage your blood sugars. Maybe you had an indulgent iftar and feel sluggish. Skip the guilt and prevent that feeling by using these science-based tips to help manage your blood sugar.

- **Order of Foods Eaten.** Starting your meal with veggies and protein before carbs can reduce post-meal blood sugar and insulin spikes. This is a great way to keep blood sugar steady to avoid energy slumps. If you are having a mixed meal like lasagna or biryani, start with veggies first (salad, soup or raw veggies).
- **Pair Your Carbs:** Add fat, fibre and protein to your carbohydrates for stable blood sugars. If you are having an apple, add some cheese or nuts to slow down the way the sugars are released in your bloodstream.
- **Cool Your Starches:** Cook and let your starches cool. Not only is this helpful for meal prep but the boost in resistant starch from cooling your starches will help lower post-meal blood sugar spikes.
- **Vinegar and Water:** Before a carb-rich meal have 1 tbsp of vinegar in 8 ounces of water. Vinegar contains acetic acid which slows the rate of carbohydrate digestion. If you can't drink vinegar and water, add a vinegar-based dressing to your salads or veggies.
- **Have Dessert After a Meal:** Eat dessert following a meal rather than a snack. When you enjoy a sweet treat as a standalone snack, there's nothing to buffer the sugar as it enters your bloodstream, leading to a rise in glucose levels.
- **Walk After Meals:** Research suggests that walking 10 to 15 minutes after meals can have significant benefits for blood sugar management. If you have an indulgent meal don't beat yourself up - just go for a walk!





# Grocery LIST

## BALANCED BLOOD SUGAR

### PROTEIN

- Chicken
- Lean turkey breast
- Lean beef and lamb
- Salmon
- Tuna
- Shrimp
- Eggs
- Tofu
- Edamame
- Hemp hearts
- Cheese
- Protein powder
- Skyr/Greek yogurt
- Cottage cheese
- High Protein Milk (Fairlife or Natrel)

### LOW GLYCEMIC CARBS

- Basmati rice, brown rice
- Quinoa, buckwheat
- Farro, barley
- Steelcut oats, rolled oats
- Beans, lentils
- Frozen peas, corn
- Sweet potatoes, yam, yucca
- Dates
- Dark chocolate > 70%

### FROZEN PRODUCE

- Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries)
- Broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, celery
- Spinach cubes
- Green beans

### FRESH PRODUCE

- Leafy greens (kale, romaine, spinach)
- Bell peppers
- Zucchini
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Carrots
- Avocados
- Apples, pears, melons
- Kiwis
- Oranges, lemons, limes

### HEALTHY FATS

- Nuts (e.g., almonds, pistachios, pecans)
- Seeds (e.g., pumpkin, sunflower, hemp)
- Nut butter (almond butter, peanut butter)
- Flax powder, Chia seeds
- Olives, Avocados
- Olive and Avocado oil

### CONDIMENTS & EXTRAS

- Garlic, ginger, chilli peppers
- Herbs (e.g., cilantro, parsley, dill, mint)
- Spices (e.g., turmeric, cumin, coriander)
- Cinnamon, vanilla, maca root
- Low-sodium soy sauce, Sriracha
- Vinegar, mustard
- Teas, sparkling water, kombucha
- Coconut water
- Electrolytes (e.g., LMNT, Biosteel,
- Liquid IV
- Monk fruit, whole leaf stevia, allulose





# Thank you!

I'm so grateful that you downloaded this Ramadan guide. Your commitment to taking proactive steps toward better health is inspiring and I'm honoured to be part of your wellness journey during Ramadan and beyond. Remember, each small change you make can have a significant impact on your health and vitality. I hope this guide serves as a helpful resource this Holy Month. By implementing some of the tips and strategies, you will be maintaining balanced blood sugar levels, promoting overall well-being, and optimizing your fasting experience.

As you embark on this spiritual and transformative journey of fasting, may you find strength, peace, and blessings in abundance. Ramadan Kareem!

Yours in health,

*Anar*

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