

MomsRising.org

A Guide to a Healthy Ramadan



Salaam alaikum!

We are so excited that you have chosen to engage with the MomsRising.org Healthy Ramadan Guide. From an Islamic perspective health is viewed as one of the greatest blessings that God has bestowed on mankind. Islam encourages Muslims to strive for balance and moderation in all aspects of behavior, including diet, health and exercise.

It should be noted that the greatest blessing after belief is health, as narrated in the following Hadith: The final messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) mounted the pulpit, then wept and said, “Ask Allah (swt) for forgiveness and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health”. The wisdom of this advice is supported by the overwhelming evidence that physical health also positively contributes to mental health and overall emotional well-being. However, despite the significant emphasis on physical health, wellness and balance within the Muslim tradition, African American families must also contend with challenges stemming from racial disparities in prevalence of preventable and chronic diseases, as well as access to affordable and culturally competent services.

Fortunately, Ramadan is the perfect opportunity to engage holistically in an assessment of our spiritual, physical and emotional health. MomsRising is a wonderful resource for all women who are focused on improving their health and that of their families and committed to exploring delicious, nutritious alternatives.

I invite you to join me and countless other women across the country in a movement to create change through faith-based and community partnerships. Recently, I have been fortunate to learn about Values Partnerships, a grassroots organization comprised of faith and community partners. The organization is led by Joshua DuBois, best known for his work as leader of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships during President Obama’s first term. Values Partnerships is partnering with MomsRising.org, a multicultural organization of more than a million members and over a hundred aligned organizations that works to increase family economic security, to end discrimination against women and mothers, and to build a nation where both businesses and families can thrive.

Together, MomsRising.org and Values Partnerships have put together this guide to help us collaborate, network and mobilize, so we can address health and wellness issues in our congregation and live happier, healthier, whole lives. I encourage you to use this guide to enact real change for us and for the people we love!

Salaams wa Rahma,
Kameelah Rashad
Founder and President, Muslim Wellness Foundation
Muslim Chaplain, University of Pennsylvania

THE PROBLEM

The Problem

Eat and drink, but avoid excess. (Quran 20:81)

Nutrition related illnesses like Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure threaten the health of our young people and their future potential. Today, more than 23.5 million children and adolescents in the United States—nearly one in three young people—are either obese or overweight, putting them at higher risk for these serious, even life-threatening health problems. If we don't reverse the childhood obesity epidemic, the current generation of young people could be the first in U.S. history to live sicker and die younger than their parents' generation.



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The childhood obesity epidemic is particularly severe in communities of color. Thirty-nine percent of Latino children and adolescents ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese, compared with 32 percent of Black children and about 28 percent of White children.

There are also significant disparities in access to healthy foods and safe places to play. One major study of nearly 700 neighborhoods found that communities of color and racially mixed communities have access to fewer supermarkets than predominantly White communities. Communities with high levels of poverty are also significantly less likely to have places where people can be physically active, such as parks, green spaces, and bike lanes.

While some masjids are already doing great work to help our children get and stay healthy, many more don't yet have the tools to make a change. Meals at iftars, at Sunday school and at masjid celebrations are often not based on healthy principles, and physical activity programming is still an exception, rather than the norm.

But we can change this. We can begin implementing healthy habits in our Masjids and community centers. We can advocate for policy change in our communities and across the nation. By reversing the childhood obesity epidemic, we will make our nation healthier and stronger, save lives, and ensure that all of our children have what they need to thrive.

WORKING IN
YOUR LOCAL
MUSLIM
COMMUNITY



Working in Your Local Muslim Community

“No one will be allowed to move from his position on the Day of Judgment until he has been asked how he spent his life, how he used his knowledge, how he earned and spent his money and in what pursuits he used his health”

~ Related in Tirmidhi

There are many ways you can join the fight in making our children healthier! Here are some ways you can get involved, make an impact, and inspire others to live their best lives.

GOT 5 MINUTES?:

- Initiate a conversation at your masjid. You can start by talking with community members at an iftar, at a halaqa or bringing the issue of healthy living up with the masjid board.

GOT HALF AN HOUR?

- Prepare a conversation starter using the information in this guide. Many people find it easier to initiate a conversation when they have talking points ready.

GOT AN HOUR?

- Reach out to 13 friends via email or social media.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper in order to share your concerns about childhood obesity and your commitment to promoting healthy snacks in schools. This is a timely and important issue, and you have a great chance of getting published. In addition, you'll be educating and mobilizing your community around an issue that impacts everyone.

GOT A DAY?

- Organize a faith and food conference at your masjid or Islamic organization.

GOT A MONTH?

- Develop a healthy iftar menu at your masjid by asking hosts to include more vegetables, replace soda with water and limiting fried foods.
- Join or establish a school wellness committee at your local Islamic school or Sunday school.
- Challenge your local masjid to a 30-day wellness challenge.
- Create a blog for your masjid or Islamic organization.
- Start a Wellness Committee at your masjid to find ways to incorporate exercise and healthy eating into your masjid's programming.

SPEAKING TIPS

Many of us are a little intimidated about speaking to groups or voicing opinions publicly. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Be personal and tell your story. Breaking the ice and appealing to others on a personal level will make you, and the people you're speaking to, more open and excited.
- Be yourself. Don't try to be an expert on healthy eating and school nutrition if you're not. Share why you, as a mother are concerned about this issue. That's plenty and very powerful. Share facts you've learned. Offer to find out more information if people ask for it.
- Appeal to people on a personal level. We want to tap into the shared experience of being a Muslim, a parent, and someone trying to take good care of their community.

When speaking to people, remind them of ayahs from the Quran, such as:

Eat of the good things which We have provided for you. (Quran 2:173)

Eat of what is lawful and wholesome on the earth. (Quran 2:168)



MOMSRiSiNG CAMPAiGNS



MomsRising.org Campaigns

So we know the problem, and it's a big one. But the helpful thing is, this is a fight that can be won. There are many ways you can join MomsRising in the fight in creating a healthier future for our children.

i. STOP JUNK FOOD MARKETING TO KIDS

A Federal Trade Commission report found that companies spent \$1.79 billion in 2009 on advertising food to kids. Even though almost 1 in 3 young people are at risk for nutrition-related diseases like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Nickelodeon is the biggest children's media outlet. Join us in asking them to help parents out and stop marketing junk food to children.

Take Action: We're collecting signatures to deliver to the company, here:
<http://moms.ly/NOJunk>

ii. PROMOTE HEALTHY MEALS IN SCHOOL

This summer, some members of Congress are trying to weaken school lunch standards. Just last year, parents, students, and many school leaders celebrated as the U.S. Department of Agriculture updated nutrition standards for school lunches for the first time in 15 years, ensuring that students eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and avoid sugary snacks and foods that are high in fat or sodium. The vast majority of schools (90 percent) are already meeting the standards and serving healthy choices to the 31 million students who eat school meals every day.

Take Action: We're collecting signatures to deliver to Congress, here:
<http://moms.ly/SaveSchoolLunch>

iii. SHARE INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA DURING RAMADAN

As Muslims across the world come together to fast to strengthen their Iman, what better time to help create a healthy and just food environment for our children? Here are some sample tweets you can share on social media during Ramadan.

- Eat of the good things, which We have provided for you. (Quran 2:173). #SaveSchoolLunch <http://moms.ly/SaveSchoolLunch>
- Eat of what is lawful and wholesome on the earth. (Quran 2:168). Help make sure our children have wholesome lunches. Tell Congress to #SaveSchoolLunch <http://moms.ly/SaveSchoolLunch>

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- While we fast during Ramadan and moderate what we watch on TV, help us improve what our children watch. Help us stop junk food marketing to children. bitly://moms.ly/NOJunk
 - During Ramadan, consider writing a blog or starting a conversation about the impact of junk food marketing on kids and communities or about the importance of school lunches.

By no means are you restricted to the above! Your personal story is powerful!

IV. SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US & CONNECT WITH US FOR MORE WAYS TO BE INVOLVED

MomsRising.org is collecting short thoughts and reflections from individuals like you! Please take a few minutes to tell us what's working or not working in getting your community and children to eat well. What are your major challenges?

How can we educate our families and communities about making healthy choices? There's no right or wrong, your words and experiences are inherently powerful.

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Our Blog: <http://www.MomsRising.org/blog/>

Our Website: <http://www.MomsRising.org/page/moms/school-foods-making-the-school-day-healthier>

#FoodFri Tweetchats: Every Friday at 1pm ET. Follow [@MomsRising.org](#) and [#FoodFri](#) to participate.

MEET THE
MUSLIM MOMS
MAKING A
DIFFERENCE

Meet the Muslim Moms Making a Difference

The final messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) mounted the pulpit, then wept and said, "Ask Allah (swt) for forgiveness and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health."

- Related in Tirmidhi



Mubarakah Ibarahim is an internationally recognized health and fitness expert, speaker, and Entrepreneur and businesswoman. She has appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show "Thirty-Something in America", a referring fitness expert for Prevention Magazine on fitness for women over 40, the New York Times on Muslim Women and Exercise and has been a business profile on the front page of the Chicago Tribune. Her efforts as both a fitness educator and Muslim businesswoman has afforded her a unique opportunity to

be invited as a special guest to the United States White House Iftar Dinner by President Barack Obama in both 2012 and 2013. Mubarakah is a role model, helping Muslim women find ways to exercise and stay active while wearing hijab. She emphasizes that helping mothers maintain an active lifestyle is key to developing active families, particularly when it comes to Muslim girls and teens.

Mubarakah On The Sunnah Of Physical Activity

Islam is a physical religion. If you look at our five pillars, four out of five are physical actions. Salah (Prayer) is a physical action, Zakaat (Charity) is a physical action, Sauwm (Fasting) is a physical action and Hajj (Pilgrimage) is a physical action. We cannot preform the basic duties required of us if we do not take care of the tool that Allah has given us to preform those obligations, our body. Our body is a loan from our Lord and in Islamic etiquette it is our duty to care for that, which is loaned to us in the best of manners. Maintaining health strong body is the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings upon him).



Jamilah Rasheed is a mother, wife, community activist, freelance writer and an entrepreneur. She is a health enthusiast and an avid gardener. Her love of all things natural has led her to join the City Farm and Garden Working Group of New Haven Food Policy Council.

And it is He who produces gardens trellised and untrellised and date palms, and crops of different shape and taste (its fruits and seeds) and olives, pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in taste). Eat of their fruit when they ripen..." (Quran 6:141)



Jamillah On Starting A Community Garden

I have been back yard gardening for 25 years. I always found joy and fulfillment in not only eating from my own garden, but in being hands on in growing



fresh vegetables. After attending a New Haven Food Policy council Food Summit in October 2012, I was inspired to pursue using a vacant lot on the street that I live on for a community garden. The New Haven Land Trust, (NHLT) helped me secure a one-year lease for the empty lot and paid for the cost for our soil and water. We were also able to secure funding from the New England Green Fund, the Community Foundation of New Haven, CARE (Yale), and the New Haven Green Fund to cover our startup costs, i.e. wood for raised beds, some tools, a shed, the installation of a fence around the garden, and seedlings.

The garden has been very positive for the community. The children who are involved have found the garden to be fun and exciting. When there is excess produce we have gone door to door and given it out. People are learning more about the purpose of the garden and are more involved. Overall the neighborhood has benefited greatly from the presence of this beautiful green space.



Sumiya Khan, MS, RD, CD/N



Sumiya Khan is a mother of two and a Registered Dietitian and Certified Nutritionist with over 15 years of experience. She approaches diet and health by emphasizing food quality and self-care. Her approach is to find practical ways to enjoy making healthy changes to create wellness, and reconnecting people with their potential to heal using whole foods. As a consultant, Sumiya provides holistic education on all aspects of nutrition, including maternal and child health, school nutrition, weight management, chronic disease management, and cooking. She presents nutrition workshops to various Muslim communities, providing education that is culturally appropriate and in reference to the Quran and Prophetic example. In addition to her passion for food and nutrition, Sumiya enjoys baking, reading, traveling and photography.

Sumiya on how to eat during Ramadan

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Many a man gets nothing out of his fast except hunger and thirst.” (Ibn Majah). In order to transcend hunger and reap the spiritual benefits of fasting, it is important to examine what is eaten at suhur and iftar. The suhur is the sunnah meal that we are encouraged to eat just before dawn, a meal with immense barakah. Although many Muslims would rather sleep in and skip suhur, summer days are long and can lead to fatigue and dehydration. This can be remedied by drinking enough fluids, and eating a small meal that includes protein foods (dairy, meats, eggs, beans, lentils, and nuts) and high-fiber carbohydrates (fruits, vegetables, and whole grains such as whole wheat bread or oatmeal). These foods allow for greater satiety for a longer period of time, thus allowing you to focus on other acts of worship.



As the Prophet (peace be upon him) recommended, the best food for iftar is the date, an excellent source of natural sugar, fiber, and minerals. When breaking your fast, the most important rule is to not overeat. The success of a fast on your health depends on how well it is broken, for the desire to binge can be overwhelming. If one immediately puts all the excesses back in that came out during the fast, any benefit is doubtful. Allah reminds us in the Quran “...Eat and drink, but do not be extravagant. For Allah does not love those who waste.”

(7:31) Eat foods that are simple, whole, and easy to digest. “Eat of the good things with which We have provided you; but do not transgress therein...” (20:81) After dinner, don’t forget to drink ample water throughout the evening in between prayers and other activities.

Take this time to choose which eating habits you truly want to establish for the rest of the year. As you break your fast, eat slowly, chew thoroughly, limit quantities, and contemplate the blessings before you and the nourishment your food is providing.



Sarene Alsharif



Sarene is a homeschooling mom of two, a nutritionist, public health educator, and writer. She holds a master's degree in public health with a focus on disease prevention and health promotion. She is an active member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and is certified in both sports nutrition and gluten free diets. She writes for multiple blogs, magazines and websites about nutrition. Her passion for nutrition and public health stems from prevention. She believes education helps individuals and families make better choices promoting health and preventing disease.

For this reason she began her business, Healthy Plate 5, in Rockford, IL with the goal of providing families and individuals with the tools they need for a healthier lifestyle. She started her journey spreading nutrition education at local libraries, schools, fitness centers, businesses and other local organizations, while teaching nutrition and wellness at Rock Valley College and the YMCA of Rock River Valley. The children keep her motivated because she sees hope; the light of a better, healthier life for a child. When a parent or a child tells her how a program or event have impacted their lives and helped them make better choices, every second spent preparing, researching, and organizing becomes meaningful and worthwhile.

Sarene on healthy living in Islam

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "No person fills a container worse than his stomach. A few morsels that keep his back upright are sufficient for him. If he has to, then he should keep one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for his breathing." [At-Tirmidhi]. This is a Hadith to live by for health. It is packed with beneficial information. First the Prophet (peace be upon him) says "No person fills a container worse than his stomach" which refers to both quantity and quality. It is important for people to select beneficial, nutritious foods and to eat them with in the proper proportions. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) continues and recommends not over eating by filling ones stomach with a third of food and a third of water. In order to eat healthy foods the best foods are the ones that do not need nutrition labels like fruits and vegetables. For Ramadan in particular it is important to focus on whole foods rich in protein, fiber, water and nutrients in order to fuel the body through the long fast. But the length of the day does give you an opened all you can eat pass. Follow the Sunnah and only fill a third of your stomach with food; so about the size of your fist, especially for iftar. Chia seed pudding is an easy option for suhur. It is rich in key nutrients and retains loads of water to help maintain proper hydration throughout the day.



But healthy nutrition is not complete without exercise and the Prophet (peace be upon him) recognized that as well and encouraged his followers to exercise in the Hadith 'The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, while there is good in both.' Ibn Taymiyyah, one of the great Islamic scholars, understood strong believer as physical strength. This Hadith highlights the importance of maintaining a physically strong and healthy body which can only be achieved with proper nutrition and adequate exercise. Take advantage of Taraweeh for its low impact properties and try to squeeze in a workout afterwards. If your Ramadan schedule is too busy, do a quick 7 minute workout daily to maintain your fitness levels until you can get back to your regular routine post-Ramadan.

Use the opportunity of Ramadan to make nutritious choices and healthy lifestyle changes. Not only is it good for your body but it is Sunnah too. Spread the word to your friends and family, because spreading good things is Sunnah as well.