

Fasting is Wellness

Ramadan 1447 / 2026 Newsletter

As the blessed month of Ramadan approaches, the Alfaisal Wellbeing Office (AWO) warmly extends its greetings to our community.

Ramadan 2026 is expected to begin around February 18 or 19 (subject to moon sighting). This year's theme, "**Fasting with Purpose: Renew, Recharge, Reconnect,**" invites you to approach Ramadan with intention, renewing your body through mindful nutrition, recharging your mental wellbeing, and reconnecting with your spirituality and community.

In this edition, you'll find evidence-based wellness tips, new research on fasting's benefits for gut health and emotional resilience, community event updates, nourishing recipes, and our new 30-Day Ramadan Wellness Challenge to support you throughout the month.



امساكية شهر رمضان ٢٠٢٦ م - ١٤٤٧ هـ الرياض

اليوم	الهجري	الميلادي	الفجر	الشروق	الظهر	العصر	المغرب	العشاء
الأربعاء	9 - 01	2 - 18	5:06	6:25	12:07	3:23	5:49	7:49
الخميس	9 - 02	2 - 19	5:05	6:24	12:07	3:23	5:49	7:49
الجمعة	9 - 03	2 - 20	5:05	6:23	12:06	3:23	5:50	7:50
السبت	9 - 04	2 - 21	5:04	6:22	12:06	3:24	5:51	7:51
الأحد	9 - 05	2 - 22	5:03	6:22	12:06	3:24	5:51	7:51
الاثنين	9 - 06	2 - 23	5:02	6:21	12:06	3:24	5:52	7:52
الثلاثاء	9 - 07	2 - 24	5:02	6:20	12:06	3:25	5:52	7:52
الأربعاء	9 - 08	2 - 25	5:01	6:19	12:06	3:25	5:53	7:53
الخميس	9 - 09	2 - 26	5:00	6:18	12:06	3:25	5:53	7:53
الجمعة	9 - 10	2 - 27	4:59	6:17	12:05	3:25	5:54	7:54
السبت	9 - 11	2 - 28	4:58	6:16	12:05	3:25	5:54	7:54
الأحد	9 - 12	3 - 01	4:57	6:15	12:05	3:26	5:55	7:55
الاثنين	9 - 13	3 - 02	4:57	6:15	12:05	3:26	5:55	7:55
الثلاثاء	9 - 14	3 - 03	4:56	6:14	12:05	3:26	5:56	7:56
الأربعاء	9 - 15	3 - 04	4:55	6:13	12:04	3:26	5:56	7:56
الخميس	9 - 16	3 - 05	4:54	6:12	12:04	3:26	5:57	7:57
الجمعة	9 - 17	3 - 06	4:53	6:11	12:04	3:26	5:57	7:57
السبت	9 - 18	3 - 07	4:52	6:10	12:04	3:26	5:58	7:58
الأحد	9 - 19	3 - 08	4:51	6:09	12:04	3:26	5:58	7:58
الاثنين	9 - 20	3 - 09	4:50	6:08	12:03	3:26	5:59	7:59
الثلاثاء	9 - 21	3 - 10	4:49	6:07	12:03	3:26	5:59	7:59
الأربعاء	9 - 22	3 - 11	4:48	6:06	12:03	3:27	6:00	8:00
الخميس	9 - 23	3 - 12	4:47	6:05	12:02	3:27	6:00	8:00
الجمعة	9 - 24	3 - 13	4:46	6:04	12:02	3:27	6:01	8:01
السبت	9 - 25	3 - 14	4:45	6:03	12:02	3:27	6:01	8:01
الأحد	9 - 26	3 - 15	4:44	6:02	12:02	3:27	6:02	8:02
الاثنين	9 - 27	3 - 16	4:43	6:01	12:01	3:27	6:02	8:02
الثلاثاء	9 - 28	3 - 17	4:42	6:00	12:01	3:26	6:03	8:03
الأربعاء	9 - 29	3 - 18	4:41	5:59	12:01	3:26	6:03	8:03

Research Update

What Science Tells Us About Fasting



1. Your Gut Loves Fasting

Recent research shows fasting reshapes the gut microbiome – the trillions of microorganisms that support digestion, immunity, and metabolism.

- A 2024 study in *Nature Communications* found intermittent fasting improved microbial diversity and reduced gastrointestinal symptoms compared to simple calorie restriction ([Mohr et al., 2024](#)).
- A review in *Frontiers in Nutrition* confirmed that Ramadan fasting leads to meaningful shifts in gut bacteria composition ([Paukkonen et al., 2024](#)).
- Research from Pakistan published in *Frontiers in Systems Biology* showed increased levels of beneficial short-chain fatty acid-producing bacteria during Ramadan ([Gul et al., 2025](#)).

Maximize these benefits:

Include fiber-rich foods, fermented options (yogurt, kefir), legumes, garlic, onions, bananas, and vegetables at suhoor and iftar.

Research Update

What Science Tells Us About Fasting



2. Fasting & Mental Wellbeing

A 2025 systematic review in Discover Psychology reported:

- 72.7% of studies showed reduced depression
- 66.6% showed reduced anxiety
- 85.7% showed lower stress levels during Ramadan (Miladi et al., 2025)

3. Metabolic & Cellular Renewal

Time-restricted eating improves insulin sensitivity and metabolic flexibility (de Cabo & Mattson, 2019).

Fasting also stimulates autophagy, the body's cellular "self-cleaning" process linked to regeneration and longevity (Bagherniya et al., 2018). These benefits are strongest when balanced nutrition is maintained during non-fasting hours.



First Things First

Stay Safe While Fasting

Your health comes first.

1. Consult Your Doctor If You Have:

- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Hypertension
- Any chronic condition



2. Never adjust medications without medical supervision.

3. Monitor your blood sugar and blood pressure regularly during Ramadan



4. Recognize when to break your fast

- Warning signs: dizziness, severe fatigue, confusion, dehydration, abnormal heartbeat
- Break your fast immediately if symptoms become severe. Islam prioritizes preservation of life.



Digital Health Resources (Saudi Arabia)

- MOH Hotline – 937 (24/7 consultation)
- Sehhaty App
- Mawid App
- Wasfaty Platform





Wellness Pillars for Ramadan 2026

Hydration: Make Every Sip Count

Fasting hours in Riyadh are expected to range 11–13 hours



- **Aim for 30–35 ml** per kg body weight ($\approx 2.1\text{--}2.5$ L for 70 kg) (Perrier et al., 2020). Spread intake between iftar and suhoor.
- **Boost absorption:** Add natural electrolytes (lemon + pinch of salt). Include hydrating foods: cucumber, watermelon, yogurt. (Dennis et al., 2010).
- **Pace yourself:** Avoid drinking large amounts of water all at once. Instead, aim for 1 to 2 glasses per hour between iftar and suhoor to give your kidneys time to absorb the water properly (Munoz et al., 2019).
- **Cut back on caffeine early:** Reduce caffeine 1–2 weeks before Ramadan. (Clark & Landolt, 2017).



Wellness Pillars for Ramadan 2026

Nutrition: Fuel Smart, Not Just Full

Suhoor Strategy:

Combine complex carbs + protein + healthy fats

- Example: whole-grain porridge with nuts and egg, or avocado toast with Greek yogurt. (Fernando et al., 2019).



Iftar Strategy:

- Break fast with dates and water, then a balanced plate.
- Avoid overeating to maintain metabolic benefits. (Lessan & Ali, 2019).
- **Micronutrients Matter:** Prioritize leafy greens, legumes, seeds, bananas. (Kiani et al., 2022).

Mental Wellness: Slow Down and Be Present

- **5-Minute daily breathing practice:** Research shows that conscious breathing can meaningfully reduce stress hormones and improve psychological wellbeing (Haque & Keshavarzi, 2014).
- **Start a gratitude journal** (3 things daily)
- **Sit digital detox hours:** Use time for Quran, reflection, and connection





NEW: The AWO 30-Day Ramadan Wellness Challenge

Small daily actions. Big impact.



Week	Body	Mind	Soul	Community
Week 1	Track water intake daily	5-min breathing before bed	Read at least 1 page of Quran after each prayer	Share a meal with someone new
Week 2	Add one serving of vegetables to each meal	Write 3 gratitude notes daily	Learn one new dua and reflect on its meaning	Check in on a friend or colleague you have not spoken to recently
Week 3	Walk 15 minutes after iftar	No phones for 1 hour before bed	Attend taraweeh at least 3 times this week	Donate to a cause or volunteer your time
Week 4	Try a new healthy recipe for suhoor	Reflect on a habit you want to carry beyond Ramadan	Spend last 10 nights in extra worship and reflection	Organize or attend a group iftar

Share your progress on social media or with the AWO team at awo@alfaisal.edu.

You can tag us on LinkedIn @Alfaisal Wellbeing Office.

We would love to celebrate your journey!

Winners will be awarded and recognized after Eid break



New on Campus: Healthy Biotic Vending Machine Now Available!

Location: Ground Floor, near food court beside the ATM.

- Variety of health-conscious snack and beverage options to support balanced nutrition.
- Products are selected to promote better dietary choices, with options lower in added sugars and highly processed ingredients.
- Convenient access makes it easier for students and staff to make mindful choices—especially during Ramadan and exam season.



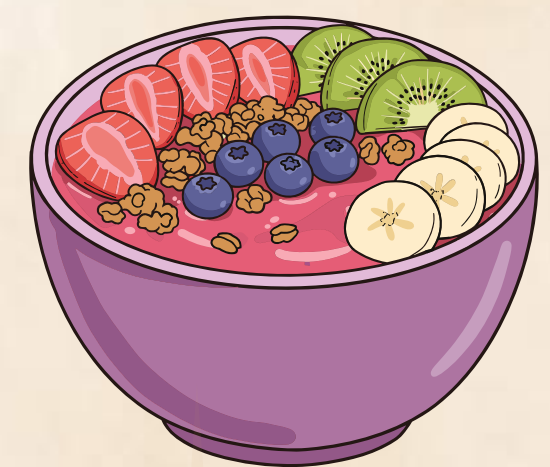
Nutritious Recipe Spotlight

Power-Packed Suhoor Smoothie Bowl

A quick, nutrient-dense option that takes minutes to prepare and keeps you going through the fasting day.

Ingredients:

- 1 frozen banana
- 1/2 cup frozen mixed berries
- 1 tablespoon almond butter
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 3/4 cup milk (dairy or plant-based/coconut)
- 1/4 cup granola and a drizzle of honey for topping



Method: Blend the banana, berries, almond butter, chia seeds, and milk until smooth and thick. Pour into a bowl and top with granola and honey. This combination delivers slow-releasing carbohydrates, protein, healthy fats, and fiber for sustained energy.

Refreshing Iftar Laban (Yogurt Drink)

A cooling, hydrating drink to ease you into your iftar meal.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1/2 cup cold water
- A pinch of salt
- Fresh mint leaves (optional)
- A squeeze of lemon (optional)



Method: Blend all ingredients until smooth and frothy. Serve chilled alongside dates to break your fast. The yogurt provides probiotics for gut health, protein for satiety, and natural electrolytes for rehydration.

Sustainability Tip

A Greener Ramadan



Research shows that food waste can increase by up to 25% during Ramadan in some communities ([Baig et al., 2019](#)).

This year, be intentional about reducing waste:

1. Plan your meals for the week and shop with a list to avoid overbuying.
2. Cook in reasonable portions. Leftovers from iftar can become creative suhoor options.
3. Use reusable plates, cups, and cutlery at iftar gatherings. If disposables are necessary, choose biodegradable options.
4. Donate excess food to those in need rather than discarding it.



Alfaisal On-Campus Clinic Ramadan Hours

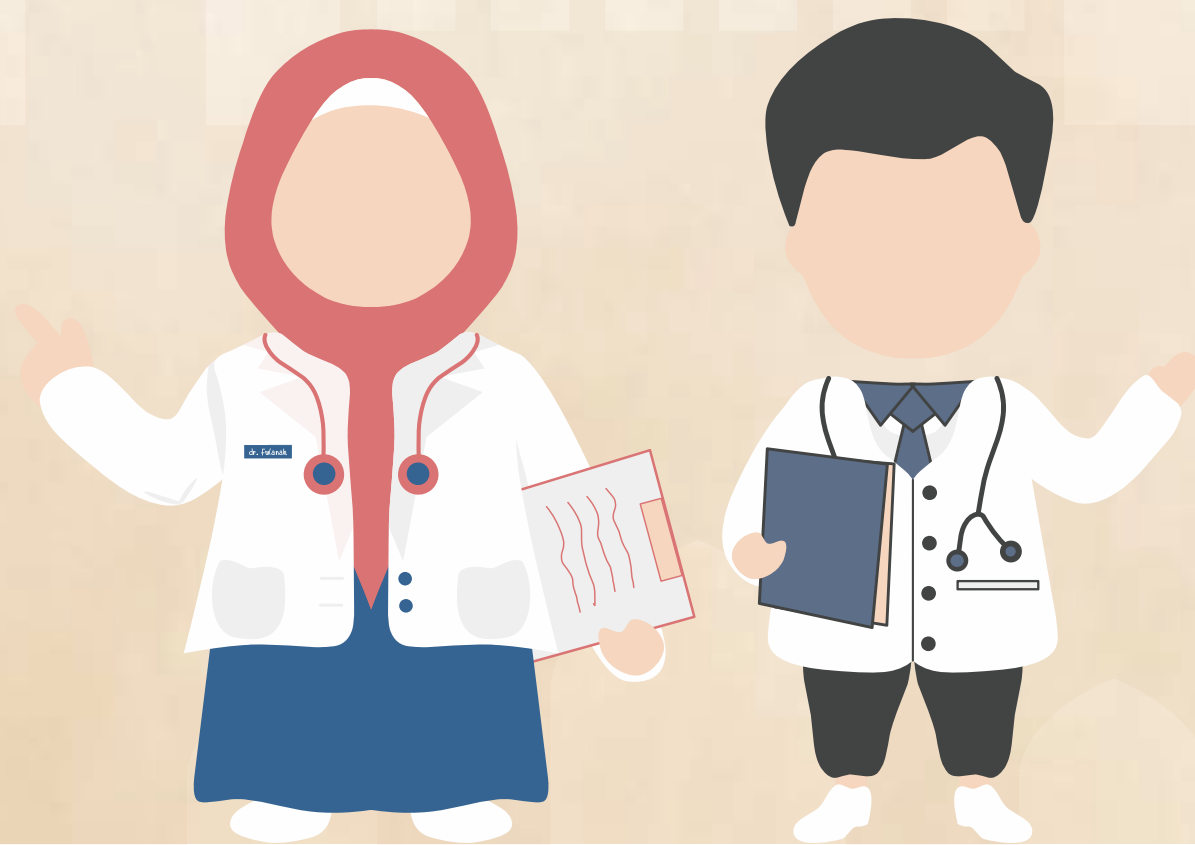
On-Campus Clinic Ramadan Hours:
9:00AM - 4:00PM | 9:00PM - 2:00AM

Locations:

- **Female Students:** 2nd floor, opposite female theater
- **Male Students:** Beside the Masjid, Gate 2

Emergency: 0540602600 | 0503011309

Extensions: Females: 7484 | Males: 7485



Closing Thoughts

As we prepare to welcome Ramadan 2026, the AWO team encourages you to approach this sacred month with purpose and presence. By combining evidence-based wellness practices with spiritual devotion, we can experience the full transformative potential of this blessed time, InshaAllah!

We welcome your feedback, questions, and ideas. Reach out to us anytime at awo@alfaisal.edu.

Wishing you a blessed, healthy, and meaningful Ramadan.
The AWO Team

Missed our earlier editions? Catch up on the wellness tips, recipes, and community highlights from previous years: [2024](#) and [2025](#).

We would like to thank Dr. Abdul Rehman Zia Zaidi for the detailed literature review done for the creation of this newsletter.

Dr. Raaina Mahevish & Dr. Farah Almasri for reviewing and designing.

