



# GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

## RAMADAN 2021

RAMADAN WORKING GROUP  
CANADIAN MUSLIM COVID-19 TASK FORCE

#SafeRamadan

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## RAMADAN GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

This year's Ramadan will again be unique and different from last year. We continue to live amidst a pandemic with a high risk of infection and illness, yet we also have opportunities to be vaccinated to protect ourselves and our communities. We must be vigilant in ensuring that we keep up the precautions that we've been maintaining over this long year, as a promising future is near. Obeying the law is as much a civic duty as a religious obligation in Islam.

The following recommendations aim to ensure that we can observe the blessed month of Ramadan in a safe and spiritually meaningful way. These guidelines were informed by government policy, evidence-based medical and public health principles and Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence), given the extenuating circumstances we currently find ourselves in. May Allah accept our supplications and may the blessings of Ramadan permeate our hearts, our homes, and our communities. Ameen.

### Caring for Ourselves and Our Family

- The same key principles that we have already been following throughout this pandemic remain highly relevant and effective during Ramadan as well, including:
  - Minimizing the size of **group gatherings** to allowable limits and avoiding unnecessary, high-risk exposures
  - Practising **physical distancing** (2 metres)
  - **Wearing a mask effectively** in public settings (Appendix A)
  - **Washing our hands** regularly and effectively
  - Downloading, installing and running the official [Canada COVID-19 Alert app](#) so that we are notified and can notify others anonymously, when exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19, respectively.
- Regardless of being partially or fully vaccinated, we must continue to practice public health measures in interactions with members from outside of our household and in public settings.
- The past year has been tough for everyone. It is important to seek help from others when we are feeling overwhelmed. Our task force website contains many Canadian Muslim and other [financial](#), [food](#) and [mental health](#) support links that can be accessed.

### Getting Tested for COVID-19 During Ramadan

- Getting a COVID-19 test while fasting will not break our fast.
- If we have been exposed to or have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), we should get tested as soon as possible.

## If We Develop COVID-19 or Illness During Ramadan

- If we are sick or have symptoms, we should stay at home and isolate from everyone else in the house. We should connect with our local public health department and healthcare provider (e.g. doctor or nurse) for guidance on how best to take care of ourselves.
- If the symptoms are severe or we cannot manage at home, we should not hesitate in going to the emergency department at our local hospital.
- As with any illness, it is not mandatory to fast if we are ill, and fasting in some scenarios may potentially pose a risk to our health. We can make up our fast afterwards when we are better, or can pay the appropriate amount of *fidyah* (feeding one needy person per day) if we have a chronic illness or cannot fast indefinitely.
- If we have questions regarding whether it is safe for us to fast or if we qualify for an exemption, we should reach out to our healthcare provider and local Imam for guidance.
- If we have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and have recently attended a mosque, we should inform the mosque and our local public health department. If we have either the [Canadian COVID-19 Alert App](#) or the [COVID-19 reporting form](#) downloaded, we should anonymously indicate our COVID-19 status there as well.

## Vaccination During Ramadan

- This year, the COVID-19 vaccine will likely be available to many individuals during the month of Ramadan. Everyone is recommended to get vaccinated as soon as they are eligible, and without delay.
- All licenced vaccines are effective at reducing the risk of severe disease, hospitalizations, and death from COVID-19.
- The [Pfizer-BioNTech](#), [Moderna](#), [AstraZeneca-Oxford](#), and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccines are Halal and permissible for Muslims to take. A detailed statement regarding the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) vaccine will be released in the coming weeks *InshAllah*.
- Taking the COVID-19 vaccine does not break our fast.
- It is not necessary to eat before or right after vaccination. Staying hydrated and eating nourishing *suhoors* will help ensure that we are staying well for activities during Ramadan, including vaccination.
- The vast majority will be able to receive the vaccine and have minimal or no side effects, whether fasting or not. If we feel our condition will worsen if we keep our fast, then it is permissible to break it.
- All current public health measures related to gatherings, masking and physical distancing in all public spaces must still be followed.

## Caring for Our Communities

*“O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you - as it was for those before you - so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah.” [Quran, 2:183]*

- If our local mosque is unable to accommodate in-person prayer, we should pray at home and not start private prayer gatherings with those outside of our household.
- While praying in the mosque may be less available, there are many other spiritually enlightening opportunities in Ramadan that we can avail:
  - Generosity and volunteering
    - [Volunteer Canada](#) collects links for various local volunteer opportunities that are safe during the COVID-19 pandemic
    - Reach out to your local mosque to ask if they need any assistance
    - Make monetary or food donations to [local food banks](#) and mosques
    - Make monetary donations if feasible to local mosques, charities and community organizations
    - *“Wealth will not be decreased by giving to charity. And a forgiving slave must be rewarded by Allah with authority” [Sahih Muslim].*
- We may continue worshipping at home through increased recitation of the Quran, connecting with our family and learning more about Islam.
  - Set aside time during the day for at least 30 minutes to focus on our *deen*.
  - Remember to support and make *dua* for the vulnerable and those less fortunate.
- We should reach out (virtually or safely in person if permitted) and connect with our neighbours, families, and friends. Many in our communities need additional support if they are recovering from COVID-19, have to stay home from work to isolate, or are struggling with social isolation.

## Visiting the Mosque During Ramadan

- If our local mosque is open to the public, it is permissible to attend. Similarly, if our local mosque is closed to the public due to high rates of COVID-19 in the region, we are [afforded a concession](#) to continue praying at home, similar to earlier in the pandemic.
- **We should follow all the rules of our mosque with regard to screening, contact tracing, registration for prayers, masking, physical distancing, and the maximum size of congregation.**
  - *“Do not cause harm or return harm.” [Ibn Majah]*
- Mosques will be limited by whether or not they are open to the public, and by the maximum number of worshippers who may pray in-person. Let’s be respectful and patient with our mosque administrators and Imams as they do their best to serve the spiritual needs of our communities.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Jumu’ah prayer [remains non-obligatory](#).

- We should not attend multiple mosques during the month of Ramadan. For example, **do not** attend one mosque for *Jumu'ah* and another mosque for *Taraweeh*.
- We should not travel between different regions to attend alternative mosques. This poses additional risks to mosque staff and other communities.
- We should not carpool to the mosque with members of other households.
- [IslamicFinder](#) and [The Masjid App](#) are useful ways to find active mosques near you.

### ***Iftaar* Gatherings in the Community**

- *Iftaar* gatherings serve a purpose in creating unity and community during Ramadan.
- If gatherings with others outside of your household are not permitted within your region as per the most updated public health guidelines, we should not host or attend *Iftaar* gatherings.
- If gatherings are permitted, we should stay within permitted regional allowances and recommendations (including gathering size limits, physical distancing and masking requirements).
- If we or anyone in close contact with us is sick with symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed, we should not attend any gatherings, get tested as soon as possible, isolate, and seek medical attention as necessary.

### ***Taraweeh* Prayers at Home**

- Praying *Taraweeh* in the mosque and at home are both from the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PBUH).
- *Taraweeh* prayers may be prayed individually and do not have to be performed in *Jama'ah* (congregation). This is a recommended option for unvaccinated and high-risk (elderly, chronic medical conditions, or for those with weak immune systems) groups, and those under quarantine or isolation.
- Following the prayer virtually is not permitted by the four schools of thought in Islamic jurisprudence.

### ***'Itikaf* (Last 10 Days Isolation in the Mosque)**

- We strongly do not recommend *'Itikaf* in the mosque this year.

## APPENDIX A – RATIONALE & CONSIDERATIONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

### Effective Masking

An [effective mask](#) covers your nose, mouth, and chin without any leaks or gaps. If your mask does not do this, it will be less effective. Similarly, masks with valves are strongly discouraged.

- Wear a mask whenever you are in public or interacting with others outside of your household. Do not pull down your mask while speaking with someone, and instead try speaking louder and slower to better convey your message.
- Wearing a face shield provides additional protection, especially for vulnerable individuals, but is not an equivalent alternative to wearing a mask. If you choose to wear a face shield, you should still wear a mask underneath.
- Wearing a [well-fitting](#) mask with 3 layers (2 fabric layers + filter) is encouraged to minimize transmission.
- ASTM level 2 or 3 masks or better are not required but provide additional protection at a cost. They can be purchased by community members or mosques from this [list of Canadian suppliers](#) collated by Masks4Canada.
- Individuals unable to or exempt from wearing a mask will not be able to attend the mosque.

### Gatherings

Reducing community spread of COVID-19 is critical not just within the mosque, but also in all our community interactions as well. All Canadians have a role to play in curbing the spread of COVID-19 within our communities. If we are complacent and there are outbreaks of COVID-19 due to community gatherings, this may result in changes to the region's COVID-19 framework zone or phase, perpetuate negative perceptions of Muslims, and subsequently may jeopardize the ability of our mosques to accommodate as many persons as possible during Ramadan.

### Vaccination During Ramadan

The COVID-19 vaccine roll-out may allow the highest risk members of our society to be protected and therefore able to safely attend the mosque if fully vaccinated. Before Ramadan, it is strongly recommended to encourage as many of your congregation, especially seniors, to get vaccinated. Faith leaders can mention that this is now a mandatory requirement for Hajj as announced by the Ministry in Saudi Arabia. However, vaccination should not be used as a barrier for entry as congregants may not have access to vaccines or may have underlying medical conditions that prevent vaccination.

### Management of Congregants

Each mosque is different in terms of geographic location, local regulations, congregation demographic, building capacity, rooms and ventilation, staffing, and resources. These differences will inform many decisions around attendee management, including permissible capacity and the need for security.

Nonetheless, it is critical to maintain maximum COVID-19 safety measures, as the 3rd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada is more dangerous than prior waves. If appropriate precautionary measures for COVID-19 are not taken, this could cause an upsurge in cases during the middle of Ramadan, impacting both the health of our community and access to mosques and prayer spaces. This would be especially unfortunate if it impacted the blessed last 10 days of Ramadan. As a community, we should all aim to ensure that full precautions are taken including hand hygiene, physical distancing and masking in all our daily interactions.

### **Maintaining a Clean Space**

Many of these clean space measures already exist at most mosques as they have been implemented over the past year. It will be important to uphold measures wherever they exist and seek to continue adherence and improvement wherever necessary.

### **Service Recommendations**

The goal in managing congregants, ensuring clean spaces, and controlling certain activities during Ramadan is to mitigate risk, as outbreaks not only pose a risk to health and life, but can lead to closures and affect the opportunity for others to pray at the mosque.

Regional curfews, fire and property regulations for both indoor and outdoor prayers must be adhered to by law by both congregants and mosques.

There are strong evidence-based concerns regarding the 3rd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, based on predictive modelling for Canada and the experiences of other countries with the rising proportion of variants of concern. These variants are not just highly transmissible but can cause more severe illness. Ramadan this year unfortunately coincides with the 3rd wave and it will be imperative to maintain good adherence to regional and governmental guidelines to protect our community and to ensure a smooth and uninterrupted observance of Ramadan.

### **Sunnah Prayers**

*Sunnah* and *Nafl* prayers should be prayed at home in regions with high rates of COVID-19, to make it quicker for congregants to enter and leave the mosque as a group, to facilitate timely cleaning and minimize time spent in the same environment. This may be more flexible in regions with lower prevalence and decreased restrictions.

### **Iftaar**

*Iftaar* dinners provide an opportunity for Muslims to connect as a community during Ramadan and an opportunity to connect with faith. However, the risk of an infection spreading and developing



COVID-19 is very high with indoor gatherings where members not from the same household remove their masks to eat while engaging in conversation and socializing.

These guidelines make preferential recommendations for *Iftaars* prioritizing safety, while acknowledging the importance of community. These preferences occur in order to discourage indoor dinner gatherings while maximizing physical distancing measures. Extra consideration is made to minimize potential contact and exposure with individually packaged foods. Outdoor physically-distanced *Iftaar* dinners should only occur in regions where local public health authorities have loosened restrictions and allowed outdoor dining gatherings. Fire and property regulations must be followed with regard to eating locations.

Mosques have final discretion on their capacity to host Drive-thru *Iftaars* and outdoor physically-distanced *Iftaar* dinners on mosque property, within regional limits. Mosques should be proactive in understanding how their congregants may approach outdoor *Iftaars* in proximity to the mosque.

### ***Taraweeh***

All Muslim scholars agree that *Taraweeh* prayer is not *Fardh*. Some say that it is *Nafl* or voluntary while some say that it is *Sunnah*, even an emphasized *Sunnah*. It is reported in *Bukhari* that the Prophet (PBUH) prayed two or three nights with the community, but stopped doing so, so that it would not be considered a *Fardh*. He then told the people to pray in their homes. In line with our recommendation to pray *Sunnah* prayers at home, for mosques in regions where there is significant concern about the spread of the virus, multiple *Isha* prayers may be held at the mosque and community members should pray *Taraweeh* at home with their families. Those who pray *Taraweeh* at home this year, while COVID-19 rates are high, should not feel that they are neglecting something essential in our religion. On the contrary, they will be following the explicit instruction of the Prophet (PBUH).

### ***'Itikaf***

*'Itikaf* is *Sunnah* and is not recommended due to limitations in mosque infrastructure. As Muslims from different households would be living in the same space, taking off their masks and sharing the same air and bathrooms, individual risk mitigation strategies cannot be guaranteed despite having dividers or separate rooms for those performing *'Itikaf*. It is also important to note that during *'Itikaf*, additional congregants would still be entering the mosque for various services like daily prayers or *Taraweeh* and would therefore be exposed to the *'Itikaf* members.

## APPENDIX B – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. Does having a COVID-19 test break my fast?**

No, taking a COVID-19 test while fasting does not break the fast.

### **2. If I feel symptoms of COVID-19, do I have to break my fast?**

Symptoms of COVID-19 can vary. If fasting will worsen your illness, delay your recovery, or if you need to take medications urgently, an exemption to the fast can be made. Missed fasts must be made up later. Consult your doctor if you are unsure whether fasting is safe for you, or your Imam if you are unsure about exemptions to the fast. Get tested and/or seek medical attention as appropriate.

### **3. Does getting a COVID-19 vaccine break my fast?**

No, taking the vaccine while fasting does not break the fast.

### **4. If I feel symptoms from vaccination, do I have to break my fast?**

Most people will have minimal or no symptoms from vaccination and should not need to break their fast. If you feel your condition will worsen if you keep your fast, then it is permissible to break it.

### **5. Should I delay my vaccine appointment until after *Iftaar* or Ramadan?**

There is no medical or religious reason to delay a vaccine appointment while fasting.

### **6. Can we have *Iftaar* with our extended family?**

Depending on your region, community gatherings with those who do not live with you may not be allowed. Please follow regional public health guidance on what is permissible for social gatherings.

### **7. If we, or members of other households, are partially or fully vaccinated, can we meet for *Iftaar* or other gatherings?**

Regardless of being partially or fully vaccinated, we must continue to practice public health measures in all our interactions with those outside our household and in public settings for the foreseeable future. This includes physical distancing, wearing a mask, hand hygiene and following local public health guidance on gathering limits.