

Breastfeeding and Fasting

To abstain from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadhaan is a compulsory article of faith in Islam whilst breast milk is the birth- right of every newborn child and mentioned several times in the Noble Quran. (*Surah Al Baqarah Verse 233 & Surah Luqman Verse 14*)

A pregnant or lactating woman's needs for energy and nutrients are more critical than the needs of others and varies between individuals depending on their physiological make up. The duration of fast too differs depending on the geographic location.

Therefore it is a great blessing and a mercy from Almighty Allah that breastfeeding women have been granted Divine concession on fasting. The breastfeeding mother who experiences weakness and difficulty in fasting may choose to defer it and compensate for the missed fast at a later time.

Studies on lactating women in West Africa who were fasting for Ramadhaan (no food or fluids between 5:00 am and 7:30 pm) found that milk volume was not affected but the composition did change to a certain extent. The researchers noted that the women appeared to super-hydrate themselves overnight when fluids were allowed to lessen daytime dehydration. A breastfeeding woman's body appears to make several metabolic adaptations that ensure that milk production is not affected.

Breastfeeding brings immense health benefits to the baby and mother. It is free of Haraam substances and the offspring consumes that which is pure. Some benefits are listed as follows:

- The natural production of Colostrum (the first milk in the early days of breastfeeding) acts as a vaccine, contains large quantities of antibodies, high in nutrition and easy to digest.

- Helps baby's brain develop its maximum potential.
- Mother's milk is clean, safe, convenient and free.
- Breast milk is easily digestible and does not give rise to allergies.
- Suckling at the breast helps to develop and strengthen baby's palate.
- Ease of travel with the baby. There is no need to carry feeding bottles, flask, milk formula, etc.
- It strengthens the bond between mother and child.
- Helps the mother recover from pregnancy and delivery. It returns the uterus to its original size and helps weight loss.
- Reduces the risk of breast cancer.

For those who have no option or simply choose to bottle-feed their baby, beware the minefield of Haraam ingredients used in the manufacture of baby formulae. **SANHA** has uncovered the use of Haraam ingredients such as pork enzymes, animal fat and also whey from non-Halaal sources in the manufacture of baby formulae over the years and has published cautionary notices on these.

For a list of baby formulae certified Halaal by **SANHA** go to:

<http://www.sanha.org.za/flashnews/babyformula.pdf>

May Allah give you, your baby, family and all Muslims a Ramadhaan of good health, inner peace and Divine blessings.

Related reading: [With Nurturing at her Breast and Heaven at her feet by Dr Shabana Kauchali-Taleb.](#)