



A Colleague Is Fasting

JOURNEY INTO ISLAM

If someone you work or study with is observing Ramadan, a little understanding goes a long way. Here's the short version — what the fast is, and the small things that help. None of it is expected of you; all of it is appreciated.

What Ramadan is

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar — the month in which Muslims believe the Qur'an was first revealed. Its dates shift earlier each year.

Quran 2:185

Fasting in Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam, observed by Muslims worldwide each year.

Sahih al-Bukhari 8 · Sahih

What the fast involves

From dawn until sunset, a fasting Muslim takes no food and no drink at all — water included — then breaks the fast after sunset.

Quran 2:187

The aim is spiritual — to build self-restraint, God-consciousness, and empathy with those in need. It is not deprivation for its own sake.

Quran 2:183

Most rise before dawn for a light meal (*suhoor*) and break the fast at sunset (*iftar*), often with dates and water.

Not everyone fasts: those who are ill, travelling, pregnant, nursing, menstruating, or elderly are exempt, and make up the days later.

Five Pillars of Islam · Encyclopaedia Britannica

A few small things that help

- Energy often dips in the afternoon — a colleague may have been up since before dawn. Where you can, put demanding meetings or physical tasks earlier.
- Flexibility near sunset matters most: a shorter lunch, or simply leaving on time to break the fast, goes a long way.
- "Ramadan Mubarak" — or just "Happy Ramadan" — is a warm and welcome thing to say.
- The month ends with **Eid al-Fitr**, a major celebration — a natural moment for good wishes, and often a day off.

What genuinely isn't a problem

- **Eating or drinking in front of them.** Most people fasting don't expect anyone else to change what they do — no need to hide your lunch or coffee.
- **Inviting them to lunch.** They'll simply take a rain check; no offence taken.
- **Asking a respectful question.** Curiosity, kindly meant, is usually welcome.

Every claim on this sheet is cited to the Qur'an or authentic, graded hadith.

Full sources: journeyintoislam.com/pocket-guides/colleague-is-fasting

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