

FATIGUE RISK MANAGEMENT

Sleep and Performance During Ramadan

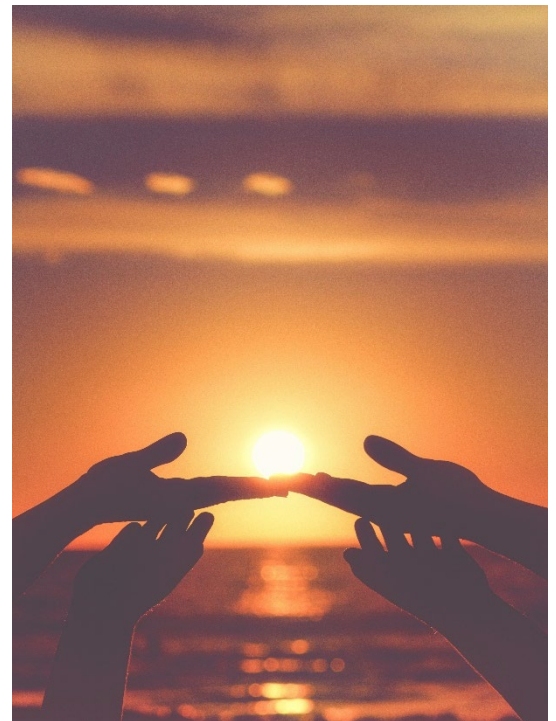
During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, approximately 22% of the world's population will refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking from sunrise to sunset. Depending on where someone lives and when Ramadan occurs will affect how long they must fast – when Ramadan falls during the summer months in the Northern Hemisphere, people in these areas will fast much longer.

Taking a 20-minute nap, followed by 10 minutes of light activity such as walking can help temporarily increase alertness and improve performance.

How can Ramadan affect my work?

While dependent on culture, typically, workplaces in North America do not adjust their schedules during Ramadan, whereas in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the entire culture shifts during Ramadan. People tend to stay up later during Ramadan to break their fast at sunset, which leads to less sleep while maintaining their regular work schedule. During Ramadan, up to 68% of individuals get less than 6 hours of sleep per night, almost double the typical number during other times of the year.

As individuals practice fasting during Ramadan, their circadian rhythm becomes more delayed. People also experience a shift to an evening/later routine due to the later bedtimes and changes in eating



habits. A large part of this change is that people shift to being more alert in the evening and more tired in the morning and during the day – creating a phenomenon similar to jetlag.

While fasting, individuals often achieve less than optimal amounts of deep sleep and dreaming sleep, which are important for memory, recovery and fending off irritability, anxiety, and inability to concentrate on tasks.

How can I combat fatigue during Ramadan?

The best thing you can do if you are fasting during Ramadan is acknowledge and be aware that you will experience fatigue and be less alert during the daytime. Connect with colleagues, and where possible, exchange tasks with colleagues who are not fasting to reduce risk to yourself and others, especially if you are working early in the morning when you will be most fatigued. If you and your colleagues are all fasting, be aware and check in regularly to mitigate risk.

As your circadian rhythm will have shifted during Ramadan, you may find it beneficial to nap during daytime hours. Taking a 20 minute nap, followed by 10 minutes of light activity such as walking can help temporarily increase alertness and improve performance.

If you aren't fasting, but a colleague is, how can you help?

If you aren't fasting but have colleagues who are, it's important to acknowledge that those who are fasting may be less alert than usual. You can offer to rotate tasks to allow your colleague to perform lower-risk tasks and help them while they are less alert. Also, ensure that colleagues get a break to eat at sundown. If you are fasting, you may be less alert than usual. Be mindful of taking needed naps and breaks and of communicating with colleagues if you are feeling fatigued.

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