

## Fact Sheet on Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month in the Arabic calendar. The Arabs have a lunar calendar that is shorter than our solar calendar so the month of Ramadan comes at a different time every year (sometimes in the summer, sometimes winter, etc.).

Fasting during Ramadan is so important that it is one of the 5 pillars of Islam. Here's how it works:

- During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast during the daylight hours. They don't eat or drink ANYTHING – even water – when the sun is up. (This is especially hard when Ramadan falls during the summer because the days are long, and people get very thirsty.) When the sun goes down, people eat a meal. And they usually get up very early in the morning (before the sun comes up) to eat breakfast.

- Children don't fast until they are teenagers. People with health issues (pregnant women, diabetics, etc.) are not supposed to fast either.

- The purpose of fasting (like the purpose for Catholics who fast by giving up meat on certain days during Lent) is to practice self-denial and focus one's thoughts on God.

- Ramadan ends with the sighting of the new crescent moon, which marks the end of the month of fasting. There is a big holiday, Eid ul-Fitr, which marks the end of the fast. People get dressed up in their best clothes and celebrate with friends and relatives. There is a lot of feasting – in contrast to a month of not eating much.