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The holy month of Ramadan falls on the ninth month of the lunar calendar. It is one of the five pillars of Islam. Ramadan involves fasting every day for one month, between dawn and sunset. Fasting is an important component of Ramadan and allows Muslims to devote themselves to their faith.

Fasting is not recommended for everyone. People who are ill or live with a medical condition, including some people with diabetes, can be exempted. However, a majority of people living with diabetes choose to fast and sometimes choose to do so in contrary to medical advice. According to the latest estimates from the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), 463 million people are living with diabetes worldwide, a figure that is set to reach 700 million by 20451. This dramatic rise will be highest in regions with large Muslim populations such as Africa, Middle-East and North Africa and South-East Asia1.

As a large number of people with diabetes fast during Ramadan, there is an urgent need for coherent, evidence-based, practical guidance to help them and the health professionals who support them to ensure a safe and healthy fast. IDF and the Diabetes and Ramadan (DAR) International Alliance have come together to deliver a comprehensive set of guidelines to meet this need.

This update of the IDF-DAR Practical Guidelines, first published in 2016, features new guidance based on a greater and more recent body of evidence. This includes an updated set of criteria for risk stratification; information on the impact of fasting on physical and mental well-being; specific guidance on the management of type 1 and type 2 diabetes in special populations such as pregnant women and the elderly; and information on changes to the risk of comorbidities such as cardiovascular disease, stroke and renal impairment.

These guidelines are intended to provide real-world recommendations to health professionals and the people with diabetes who choose to fast. It is our hope these guidelines will contribute to supporting people with diabetes to safely and successfully participate in Ramadan and enjoy the personal and spiritual benefits this can bring.

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