

### **A few simple guidelines for the pre-dawn (*Suhoor*) meal**

- It should be a wholesome, simple meal, consisting of slow-digesting foods, such as wholegrain cereals or other starches.
- It can be accompanied with lean proteins (meat, chicken or fish), which will help you to feel fuller for longer.
- Avoid heavily processed, oily and fast-digesting foods such as refined starches (white or brown sugar, white flour and white bread).
- Drink adequate fluids such as clean water, low-fat/fat-free milk, but avoid caffeine which has a dehydrating effect.
- Slow-digesting fruit, unpeeled depending on the fruit: apples, peaches, pears, citrus fruits and bananas (not overripe).
- Smoothies work well for those who don't have any appetite early in the morning.

Examples of what to eat:

- A glass of water 30 minutes before *Suhoor*
- Wholewheat cereal with low-fat or full cream milk
- Wholewheat bread with egg/peanut butter/avocado/fish
- Omelette with a large green salad
- Fresh fruit: apple, banana (not overripe), pear, peach
- Plain yoghurt with pieces of fresh fruit

For those who aren't really hungry:

- 250–300ml smoothie with raw oats, low-fat or full cream milk and fresh fruit pieces
- Meal replacement products containing a balanced combination of carbohydrates, proteins and fats

### **Guidelines for the post-dusk (*Iftar*) meal:**

- Start with hydrating, e.g. a glass of water, to prepare the stomach for the food to follow. Soup works just as well.
- Keep it simple: Half your plate should ideally consist of non-starchy vegetables, a quarter of starchy foods (rice, potato, pasta or bread) and a quarter lean proteins (red meat, chicken, eggs or fish).
- Fast-digesting foods such as dates or diluted fruit juice as a quick source of glucose.
- Make sure it's a light meal (not a feast) – to replenish energy stores. Avoid deep-fried and highly sugared foods – overindulging overstimulates the digestive system, leading to a sluggish, tired feeling after the meal.
- Alternatives to frying should be encouraged, like oven-baking, steaming and grilling.
- Limit savouries and sweet dishes to one serving/portion, choosing baked rather than fried options.

Examples of what to eat:

- A glass of water or a bowl of light soup (no cream)
- One or two dates. Dates contain electrolytes and are a quick source of energy
- One baked samosa
- Have a 10 to 15 minute break before your main course: a fist-sized portion of rice/pasta (no heavy sauces), a medium potato, or wholewheat bread
- Palm-sized portion of lean chicken, meat or fish (no batter)
- Two open handfuls of non-starchy vegetables (no heavy sauces)
- Snack between *Iftar* and *Suhoor*: fresh fruit, plain mixed nuts, plain yoghurt with fresh fruit pieces, whole wheat crackers with low fat cheese or peanut butter

*These guidelines were provided by Salaamah Solomon, registered Dietitian at Tygerberg Academic Hospital, Cape Town.*