

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.