

Avoid headaches this Ramadan



Muslims across the east coast have joined millions others around the world in observing the month of Ramadan. This means no food or liquids from sunrise to sunset. Many people suffer from headaches during Ramadan. *ECR Life* tells you how you can avoid one...

Dr Elliot Shevel who heads up the South African Headache Society has told us that mild or moderate headaches during this month are often the result caffeine withdrawal, stress and low blood sugar. But the good news is that you can manage these headaches without breaking your fast.

Shevel says: “The headaches mainly affect the frontal (forehead and temple) region, and usually last one to two hours. Headache onset often occurs in the afternoon or evening just before the fast is broken.”

He also points out that if you are generally prone to headaches, you’re more likely to suffer from them during the month of fasting. But some people, with no history of headaches or migraines, also get them during Ramadan.

What to do

Shevel says caffeine withdrawal is the most common cause of headaches while fasting.

What you should’ve done, he says, is cut back on the amount of caffeine you drink in the weeks leading up to Ramadan. If you haven’t, then a cup of strong coffee just before the start of your last may help keep the pain away.



Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) can also trigger headaches in many people. If a meal with high sugar content is eaten before the fast begins, it can cause a rapid rise in blood sugar levels followed by a fast drop that may trigger a headache. So, Shevel says you should try and stick to a meal that has a low sugar content.

Dehydration is another common trigger, says Shevel, Try and drink an adequate amount of liquids before starting your fast. This may help keep headaches at bay.

Other contributory factors include fluid retention and stress during menstruation. Shevel says: “Patients should also, as far as possible, try to avoid exposure to other triggers such as stress, fatigue and lack of sleep during Ramadan, when there is a greater tendency to headache.”

He says where possible, try to rest and sleep to help prevent being subjected to headaches and the pain often melts away when the fast is over.

When to call your doctor

Shevel says if headaches continue after Ramadan or are severe in nature, it’s best you seek help from a medical professional. He says headaches can be most successfully treated using a multidisciplinary approach, since no one medical specialization covers all the psychological and physical dimensions of severe headaches.

For more information, call The Headache Clinic on 0861 678 911