- Ramadan

Struggling with sleep? Doctors on how to rest well and avoid fasting fatigue

Here's how to navigate the month while protecting your mental health

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The fasting month brings a significant shift in daily routines, eating patterns and sleep schedules that can affect both body and mind.

One of the biggest adjustments during Ramadan is sleep. Many people stay up late after iftar for prayer and socialising, then wake before dawn for suhoor.

Over time, this pattern leads to partial sleep deprivation, which affects mood, memory, concentration and emotional resilience.

Dr Amir Firouzjaei, a general practitioner and Chinese medicine practitioner at Wellth by Medcare, explains that the combination of late nights and early mornings can elevate stress hormones in the body, reduce the quality of deep sleep and lead to a range of symptoms including irritability, restless nights, vivid dreams and persistent mental fatigue.

Dr Santhosh Abraham, Specialist Endocrinologist at Aster Clinic Al Qusais, also points out that poor sleep does not just leave you feeling tired. It also affects mood, memory and concentration, with the first

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week of Ramadan proving particularly difficult as the body struggles to adjust to the new routine.

The goal is not necessarily to get all your sleep in one block, but to aim for six to eight hours total within a 24-hour period. Here is how to make that happen:

- Go to bed at a consistent time each night, even if it is later than usual
- Add a 20 to 30 minute nap during the day to top up your rest
- Avoid heavy meals and caffeine late at night, as both interfere with sleep quality
- Try gentle breathing exercises before bed to help your body relax
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark and quiet
- Take short breaks during the day to stretch, move around and refresh your mind
- Stay in air-conditioned spaces if possible and avoid strenuous activity during peak heat
- Schedule a brief midday nap if your routine allows
- Go for a light walk after Iftar to improve circulation and help regulate blood sugar

Nutrition plays a critical role in how you feel throughout the day and how well you sleep at night. Dr Firouzjaei recommends the following approach:

- Include protein such as eggs, yoghurt or legumes
- Add complex carbohydrates like oats or whole grains for sustained energy
- Include healthy fats from nuts, seeds or avocado
- Drink water steadily rather than gulping large amounts at once
- End your fast gently with water and dates
- Follow with a balanced meal that includes protein, vegetables and complex carbohydrates
- Avoid excessive sugar and overeating, which can cause energy crashes and disrupt sleep