



Ramadan begins

This is the first food 14-year-old Ali and his family have had all day. They haven't had anything to eat or drink since sunrise this morning. It's because they're celebrating a special time of year in their religion, called Ramadan.

Ali is a Muslim, which means he follows the religion of Islam.

During the month of Ramadan most Muslim people do something called fasting. That means they don't eat or drink anything between sunrise and sunset for a whole month! They can't even drink water through the day! It's pretty tough, but for people like Ali it's a really important part of his religion.

Ali: It's just to feel how the poor people feel. You know, they don't get to have a lot of water and food so that's mostly what it's about. It's a test, yeah.

Just like other religions, Islamic people have certain times of the year to celebrate their faith, and Ramadan is one of them. During that month they spend more time thinking about their religion, kind of like Christmas or Easter for Christians or Rosh Hashanah for Jewish people.

During Ramadan Muslim people learn more about the Islamic religion by reading from their religious book, which is called the Quran, and the fasting is to help them focus on that.

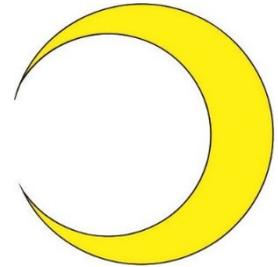
Each year Ramadan starts on a slightly different date, because the name Ramadan is actually the name of a month in the Islamic calendar and that calendar is a little bit different because it's based on the cycles of the moon. Although many Muslims don't eat or drink through the day during Ramadan, they do have some extra big meals before dawn and after sunset, because having no food or water at all for a whole month would be impossible! But even with these big meals Ali says Ramadan can still be pretty hard.

Ali: It's a little bit hard, especially, like, sometimes we have football games and, yeah, we still play but, yeah, we don't drink water!

And he and his cousins say going to school can be tricky too.

Karima: Usually my friends come with these amazing lunches from, like, different places and then I'm, like, in the classroom and they're all eating their lunch in recess and I'm there, like, you know, waiting for the bell to go and stuff, so that's probably the hardest part.

Video zone





Ali: Yeah, it's a little bit hard. I get, I get hungry really easily, so ...

Saleh: I haven't told anyone about it because I moved to this new school and I haven't fasted there yet. Tomorrow will be my first day fasting at my new school.

Around the world there are more than 1.6 billion Muslim people. That's almost one quarter of the world's population! But not all of them fast during Ramadan. People who are pregnant, elderly or people who are sick often don't. And kids only start doing it after they've reached puberty.

But some do practise fasting before then, often just for a few days. Ali has been fasting for Ramadan since he was ten and he says it's a bit easier this time.

Ali: It was really hard back then. You get more used to it.

And although it's a tough month, these guys love learning about their religion. And it doesn't hurt that there's a big party called Eid when the month wraps up!

Karima: At the end we get this big celebration. We go to the mosque and do, like, our morning prayer and stuff like that and it's, like, really fun to meet up with family and stuff.

Ali: Well, there's a lot of food we're allowed to eat, yeah, so. And there's rides and it's a lot of fun.

Ramadan can be a real challenge, but these guys wouldn't have it any other way.

Watch this video <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/video-zone/ramadan-begins>