

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

49716 - Can a Doctor Delay Iftar?

the question

My relative is a doctor and he wants to ask: if he is doing surgery can he delay breaking the fast?

Summary of answer

If a doctor cannot break his fast with fresh or dried dates, then he can break his fast with water. If he cannot, then it is sufficient for him to have the intention of breaking the fast.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Sunnah is to hasten to break the fast

The [Sunnah is to hasten to break the fast](#) as soon as the sun goes down. There are several hadiths from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) concerning that, such as the following:

Al-Bukhari (1975) and Muslim (1098) narrated from Sahl ibn Sa'd that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The people will continue to do well so long as they hasten to break the fast."

Al-Nawawi said:

"In this hadith, we are urged to [hasten to break the fast](#) , after checking that the sun has indeed set. What this means is that the ummah will continue to be in good shape and will be fine, so long

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as they adhere to this Sunnah. If they [delay \(breaking the fast\)](#) then this will be a sign of corruption that they have fallen into.”

Al-Hafiz said:

Al-Muhallab said:

“The reason behind that is so as to avoid making the day longer by taking from the night. It is also kinder to the fasting person and gives him more strength for worship. The scholars agree that this hadith refers to when it is confirmed that the sun has indeed set by visual sighting or by the testimony of two witnesses of good character – or of one such witness according to the more correct view.”

Another reason for that: “Is so as to hasten to eat that which Allah has permitted, for Allah is Most Generous, and one who is generous likes to see people hasten to enjoy his generosity. So He likes His slaves to hasten to enjoy that which Allah has permitted to them as soon as the sun sets.” (Al-Sharh al-Mumti’, 6/268)

This hadith is also a refutation of the Shi’ah who delay breaking the fast until the stars appear. This was the view of Ibn Daqiq al-’Eid.

The Sunnah is to break the fast with fresh dates

The Sunnah is for the fasting person to [break the fast with fresh dates](#) ; if he cannot find any then with dried dates; if he cannot find any then with water. If he cannot find any then he should break the fast with whatever food and drink are available.

If the fasting person cannot find anything with which to break his fast, he should break his fast in intention, i.e., he should declare that his fast is over even if that is delayed, thus he will have hastened to break the fast and followed the Sunnah in that.

Islam Question & Answer

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Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymin said in al-Sharh al-Mumti' (6/269):

“If he cannot find water or any other drink, or any food, he should intend in his heart to break his fast, and that is sufficient.”

Can doctors delay iftar?

Based on this, if this [doctor cannot break his fast](#) with fresh or dried dates, then he can break his fast with water. If he cannot do that because he is so busy [doing the operation](#) , then it is sufficient for him to have the intention of breaking the fast, and he can act in accordance with the Sunnah in this way.

And Allah knows best.