



MSD launches new and improved *Facts About Fasting During Ramadan* resource for patients and healthcare professionals

More than 225,000¹ people in Ireland currently living with diabetes

Monday, 8th June 2015 – For many of Ireland’s 49,000² Muslims, the fasting month of Ramadan – set to take place between 18th June and 17th July this year - can pose a range of health challenges, particularly among those with chronic conditions such as diabetes. With the sacred month approaching, MSD has launched *The Facts About Fasting During Ramadan*, a new and improved resource to support healthcare professionals in their interaction with patients and ensure that the proper precautions are taken to minimise risks to patients health during the holy month.

The Islamic month of Ramadan is one of the longest periods of religious fasting, during which Muslims abstain from eating, drinking and taking medication from sunrise to sunset. While guidelines from both religious and medical organisations excuse people living with diabetes from fasting due to associated health risks, fasting is a personal decision and many people with diabetes still choose to do so. In fact, approximately 50 million people with diabetes worldwide fast during Ramadan³.

Recognising the need for patient information and support during this time, MSD has launched *The Facts About Fasting During Ramadan* booklet in collaboration with Diabetes Ireland, a booklet specifically developed to provide patients with clear and concise information on managing their health during Ramadan, as well as outlining the potential issues that people with diabetes should be mindful of before they fast.

Featuring tips on preparing for Ramadan and an outline of the warning signs for associated health risks such as hypoglycaemia, hyperglycaemia, dehydration and thrombosis, the booklet also serves as a useful resource to help inform patient consultations by providing healthcare professionals with the key facts on Ramadan.

Speaking ahead of Ramadan, Health Promotion and Research Manager for Diabetes Ireland Dr Anna Clarke said, “Whether they are newly diagnosed or have lived with diabetes for a long time, it is important that those living with the condition are prepared if they do choose to fast during Ramadan. An essential part of this is encouraging patients to speak with their healthcare professional before Ramadan so that a diabetes management plan can be established. This preparation is vital in helping to effectively control blood sugar levels throughout the month and reduce the risks associated with fasting.”

Dr Zahoor ul Haq, General Physician, Nenagh General Hospital added, “Patients in whom fasting can pose serious risks to their health are clearly exempted by Islam from fasting, however for many people with type 2 diabetes, fasting is possible provided their medication is adjusted by their doctor and they take certain precautions to avoid hypoglycaemia – as outlined in this new booklet.”

The Facts About Fasting During Ramadan - which is available for download now from Diabetes Ireland (www.diabetes.ie) - is based on the *2010 ADA Recommendations for Management of Diabetes During Ramadan* and the *2012 South Asian Guidelines for Management of Endocrine Disorders in Ramadan*.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Ramadan

Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam and takes place in the ninth lunar month of the Islamic calendar (linked to the sighting of the new moon)³. This year, Ramadan will be June 18 – July 17 in the U.S., Europe, Western Asia, Africa. During this time, Muslims abstain from eating, drinking, and taking medications from before sunrise to sunset³.

MSD in Ireland

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MSD is a leader in healthcare, dedicated to helping the world be well through a wide range of innovative health solutions. This includes the development, production and distribution of prescription medicines, vaccines and biologic therapies as well as animal health products.

MSD's commitment to research and to increasing access to healthcare across the world is demonstrated by clearly focused policies, far-reaching programmes and life-enhancing partnerships.

¹ Diabetes Ireland. <http://www.diabetes.ie/about-us/diabetes-in-ireland/>

² Central Statistics Office. 2011 Census Results.

³ Al-Arouj M, Assad Khalil, Buse J, et al. Recommendations for the management of diabetes during Ramadan: update 2010. *Diabetes Care*. 2010;33:1895-902.