Fasting, not fasting, and how to eat when you cannot fast

This coming Sunday, September 20th, right before sunset, we will begin the observance of Yom Kippur, a day of fasting and atonement.

There are five prohibitions during Yom Kippur:

THE FIVE PROHIBITIONS OF YOM KIPPUR	
1	Eating and drinking
2	Washing the body
3	Anointing the body
4	Having marital relations
5	Wearing leather shoes

In some cases, we do not fast

For example:

MINORS

A boy or a girl younger than nine should not fast, even for a few hours. When children reach nine years old, they should fast for a couple of hours if they are healthy. The following year, parents should encourage them to fast for a little longer so they slowly get used to fasting for an entire day. When a child reaches eleven, they should try to fast for the whole day if they are in good health. A healthy girl of twelve and a healthy boy of thirteen are obligated to fast.

Under 9	No fasting, not even for a few hours
Age 9	A couple of hours, if healthy
Age 10	A little longer than last year
Age 11	Try to fast the whole day, if in good health
Girl 12 **Boy 13**	**Obligated to fast**

MOTHERS

A mother should not fast during the first three days after childbirth. The same rule applies for 72 hours after a miscarriage. After the first 72 hours, from the day of childbirth until the seventh day of delivery, if the mother says she needs to eat, she should eat. After the seventh day, she must fast like everyone else unless otherwise indicated by her doctor. A woman in labor should not fast.

In labor	Days 1 to 3	Days 4 to 7	After day 7
Does not fast	Does not fast (also 72 hours after a miscarriage)	If she says she needs to eat, she eats	Fasts, unless her doctor says otherwise

Days counted from childbirth

SICKNESS

A person with a chronic illness like diabetes, an elderly person who is weak due to advanced age, or someone taking necessary medication or undergoing essential medical treatment should consult a reliable physician to see if they can stop the medication or if they need to take it or if the medication can be taken without water. After discussing the options with

a physician, a Rabbi should also be consulted to determine, based on the doctor's advice, how to eat food or take medication if needed.

STEP 1 Consult a reliable physician	→	STEP 2 Consult a Rabbi

> In case of a life-threatening situation or even if that is potentially the case (*safeq sakana*), the fast should be discontinued, even if no physician was consulted. See below for instructions on how to eat when you need to break the fast.

PREGNANCY

> *The following information is a general guideline for normal and healthy pregnancies. You should not rely on this information as a substitute for professional medical advice.*

Pregnant Women: The following information is intended as a general guideline for normal and healthy pregnancies. It should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. A pregnant woman should observe the fast like everyone else, provided she and the baby are in good health and the pregnancy has no complications. Nevertheless, if the mother feels sick during Yom Kippur, particularly if she is vomiting or experiencing symptoms of dehydration, she should break the fast and eat or drink immediately (see below: "How to break the fast"). However, mild dizziness and nausea that can be managed by lying down on a couch or bed are considered normal on a fast day and should be endured. If the dizziness or nausea persists or worsens, then the fast should be interrupted.

Normal on a fast day	Break the fast
Mild dizziness or nausea that can be managed by lying down on a couch or bed	Vomiting Symptoms of dehydration Dizziness or nausea that persists or worsens



Dr. Jessica Jacob, an expert OBGYN from Long Island, NY, explains that according to research done on healthy pregnant women, there is no evidence that fasting would cause complications to the mother or her baby. A few years ago, Dr. Jacob gave a very detailed lecture in UMJCA on 'Pregnancy and Yom Kippur'. It is highly recommended for every pregnant woman to listen to this lecture, where Dr. Jacob explains the medical research on this subject. Dr. Jacob also explains why a doctor would advise a pregnant woman against fasting, how to cope with discomfort, the circumstances in which pregnant women should break the fast, etc.
Click here to download the transcript of Dr. Jacob's class.

RECOMMENDATION TO REDUCE THE RISK OF DEHYDRATION DURING YOM KIPPUR

To reduce the risk of dehydration, you should hydrate your body with enough fluids. But you have to do it the right way. Drinking much water right before the fast is of little benefit. Most of that water leaves the body right away, and usually, by the night of Yom Kippur, that water is gone. Instead of drinking a lot of water at once, you should drink small amounts of water over the 48 hours before the fast. The

recommended amount is to drink approximately 6 to 8 ounces every hour for the two days before the fast so that the cells themselves become hydrated. This recommendation is also given to athletes before running a marathon. Always consult with your physician.

✗ Little benefit	✓ The right way
A lot at once Drinking much water right before the fast. By the night of Yom Kippur, that water is gone.	**6 to 8 oz every hour** Small amounts over the 48 hours before the fast, so the cells themselves become hydrated.

HOW SHOULD YOU EAT AND DRINK WHEN YOU NEED TO BREAK THE FAST?

When you were instructed by your doctor and/or your rabbi to eat on Yom Kippur, proceed as follows

SMALL PORTIONS, WITH PAUSES

FOOD	**1 oz** (30 grams)	→ **wait 10 min**	**1 oz** as needed
DRINK	**1 oz** any liquid	→ **wait 5 min**	**1 oz** and so forth



Use 1 oz plastic cups to measure

1. Eat a portion of food up to 1 oz. (or 30 grams). After you finish the first portion, wait ten minutes and then eat the second portion of up to 1 oz. You could do this (eat 1 oz., wait ten minutes, eat 1 oz.) as needed until you recover.
2. When you need to drink. Drink 1 oz. of water or any liquid, then wait 5 minutes and drink 1 oz. again and so forth.
3. Once you feel better and don’t need to eat or drink anymore, you should continue fasting.
4. When you eat or drink on Yom Kippur for medical reasons, you do not need to fast another day to compensate for the fast.
5. To measure “1 ounce,” it is recommended to use the plastic 1 oz. Liquor shot cups (kiddush little plastic cups) as shown above.

> **6.** In case of an emergency or a possible life-threatening situation (hypoglycemia, passing out, dehydration, etc.) when these small portions are not enough, one should drink or eat whatever is necessary.