

NSS asks NHS Choices to review advice on fasting during Ramadan

Posted: Tue, 12 Jun 2018

The National Secular Society has asked NHS Choices to review health advice on its website which draws heavily on Islamic theology.

A [page](#) on the website, which purports to advise people on fasting during Ramadan, includes lines such as "children are required to fast when they reach puberty". On the question 'Can I use an asthma inhaler during Ramadan?' it says "Muslim experts have differing opinions on this issue".

It says breastfeeding mothers should make up for their lack of fasting at a later date, people on dialysis should "perform fidyah" (pay a form of 'compensation' for missing the fast) and it is "a good idea" for children to "practise fasting for a few hours at a time".

NHS Choices says the advice was "put together by medical experts and Islamic scholars and researchers".

In our correspondence with NHS Choices we wrote: "We have no objection to the NHS issuing health advice on fasting during Ramadan. But the public expects the NHS to give impartial, unbiased medical information.

"It is not the place of the NHS to dispense religious teachings. We ask that NHS Choices review this document and remove references to theological teachings so that it complies with NHS Choices' policy of providing objective, impartial and evidence-based information on healthcare."

Our chief executive Stephen Evans said: "It's reasonable for the NHS to offer advice on fasting and to highlight that advice during Ramadan, when many British people choose to fast.

"But taxpayers fund the NHS to look after their health. They don't fund it to play the imam. The health advice it provides should therefore be drafted by medical experts rather than Islamic scholars. The health service shouldn't be afraid of contradicting religious leaders when that's the right thing to do."

The information was last reviewed in 2017 and the next review is not due until April 2020.

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