



## Fasting and Dietary Requirements

### Ramadan:

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, requires Muslims to fast from dawn to sunset, abstaining from eating, drinking, and smoking. Despite fasting, Muslims continue to work. Employees observing Ramadan may not eat during typical lunch hours, but will need to eat after sunset or before dawn if working night shifts. Accommodations such as shortening work shifts by the length of an unused lunch break should be considered for mutual convenience.

### Dietary Restrictions:

Islamic dietary restrictions prohibit the consumption of alcohol, pork, and pork byproducts. Muslims often adhere to Halal standards for meat and poultry. It's beneficial for entities serving food to Muslims, such as airlines, to source Halal-certified items. Alternatively, offer options that meet Muslim dietary needs like vegetables, eggs, milk, and fish. Refrain from asking Muslim employees to serve or sell products offensive to their religion, such as alcoholic beverages.

## About Us

The Council on American-Islamic Relations of New York (CAIR-NY) is a chapter of America's largest Muslim civil right organization. CAIR-NY's mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower Muslim Americans.

## Glossary of Terms

**Eid:** A day of festivity, major religious holiday

**Halal:** Permissible by Islamic law

**Hij'ab:** Clothing Muslim women wear in public. It is generally loose-fitting and includes a head covering

**Jum'ah:** Friday congregational prayer, the Muslim weekly worship service

**Kufi:** A cap sometimes worn by Muslim men

**Qur'an:** Islamic scripture, sometimes spelled Koran

**Ramadan:** The month of fasting

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# An Employer's Guide to Islamic Practices





## U.S. Legal Protections of Religious Rights

Islamic practices are legally recognized as bona fide religious beliefs, viewed as compulsory duties by practitioners. These include prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and religious celebrations. These practices are safeguarded by U.S. legal provisions in the Bill of Rights and federal law:

- **The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which protects the free exercise of religion.**
- **Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, prohibits workplace discrimination based on faith and mandates employers to accommodate religious practices, barring undue hardship.**

Similar protections exist in state laws. The private sector is increasingly adapting rules to respect the growing number of Muslim employees and customers. It's vital to acknowledge and respect the similarities and differences in religious practices across various faith communities.

## Prayers and Holidays

Islam encourages God consciousness, mandating Muslims to pray five times a day at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night, each prayer lasting around 10-15 minutes.

### Congregational Prayers

For congregational worship, Muslims gather on Fridays for Jum'ah, typically at a mosque during noon. This prayer spans 45-90 minutes. Muslim employees should be accommodated to complete Friday prayers during an extended lunch break, making up for work time as mutually agreed.

### Holidays

Muslims celebrate Eid twice a year - post-Ramadan and on the tenth day of the twelfth Islamic month. Eid involves congregational prayers, family visits, and gift exchanges. To honor Eid, Muslims may take two days off annually. Employers should ensure this religious obligation doesn't result in undue penalties.

## Appearance

### Men

Muslim men may keep beards for religious reasons. For health and safety purposes, employers may require employees with beards to use proper covering such as hair nets or masks.

### Women

Muslim women wear attire known as hijab. It usually includes covering the hair, neck, and body, except for the face and hands. Some Muslim women may wear a face veil.

Businesses with designated uniforms should accommodate a Muslim worker's religiously mandated attire, allowing for variations that are consistent with the corporate image. For example, a corporation with a policy forbidding "hats" might consider amending the rule to exempt items such as head scarves and skullcaps.