



Caring for Muslim Children

**Basic Requirements for
Muslims**

With you every step of the way

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The majority of people will be aware of the term “halal” and will associate this to food. Halal refers to that which is lawful and hence permissible for Muslims to consume. The opposite is true for “haram”, that which is unlawful.

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Food

There are certain exceptions to the meat Muslims are allowed to consume and all meat is to be slaughtered according to Islamic law (see below). Muslims can consume all types of seafood, fruits, vegetables and dairy products provided they do not contain any animal content.

There are no restrictions on who can cook halal food, provided that the food does not come into contact with foods that are not halal, nor is it prepared with the same utensils that are used when preparing forbidden ingredients, without being properly cleaned first. For example, if an egg was cooked in sunflower oil or vegetable oil in which a non-halal meat was cooked previously the oil would be considered haram and not permissible for a Muslim. Similarly if the food was prepared on the surface that a forbidden food was prepared, the surface would need to be cleaned.

Utensils and surfaces can be cleaned using normal washing methods, such as running water over the utensils and cleaning the surface with any domestic cleaning products.

*The following meats are forbidden to be consumed by Muslims:

- Pig meat and all its products (ham, bacon, pork, gelatine, gammon)
- Wild animals that use their claws or teeth to kill prey
- All birds of prey
- Rodents
- Reptiles
- Worms and such like
- Dead animals and birds that are not slaughtered according to Islamic rites

Animals and their by-products that are slaughtered according Islamic rites are considered halal (e.g. cattle). Halal meat is available in most towns and cities and can also be bought online. Anything that is suitable for vegetarians and vegans is permissible except if it contains alcohol, even if the alcohol is boiled out. Vinegar is permissible, even though it produces alcohol through the fermentation process, however, it does not intoxicate given the level of usage.

Eating

Around the world different cultures have different preference in the way that they eat. When a Muslim child enters your home you may notice that your foster child prefers eating while seated on the floor, they may show particular behaviour about washing their hands before and immediately after eating. It may also become evident that a Muslim child will prefer eating with their fingers, as opposed to using utensils. Muslims usually observe the left and right hand rule of hygiene, in which the right hand is used for eating and the left hand is used for personal cleaning and therefore not used for eating. However, this practise may vary from child to child as this depends on the degree of knowledge and / or the wiliness to practise.



Alcohol and other stimulants

In Islamic law all substances that have a detrimental effect on a person's health are forbidden this includes alcohol and cigarettes. The preservation of the intellect is one of the primary objectives of the Islamic Shari'ah (law) and mind-altering substances are subsequently forbidden.

The Islamic ruling states, 'that which intoxicates in a large amount, is [also] forbidden even in a small amount.' For this reason, most observant Muslims avoid alcohol, even in small amounts that are sometimes used in cooking.

Respect should be shown around your foster child if you do smoke or drink alcohol as they may be uncomfortable in the presence of alcohol and cigarettes. The behaviour of your foster child should not be taken personally but by understanding the religious implications for the child.

As with any other child or young person, a Muslim child or young person can become involved in substance misuse despite their religious beliefs. This may be a helpful platform to engage the young person with and discuss the implications. The child's social worker should be informed and can help you access the correct support for both you and the child.

Dress

Both males and females have an expectation of dress in Islam.

Muslim Females have an expectation to cover from head to feet once reaching puberty when in the presence of a male outside of her immediate family (essentially father, brothers, paternal and maternal uncles and grandfathers). A female's face and hands may be uncovered although opinion can differ regarding whether a full veil is worn. Amongst other females she is also expected to dress modestly with an obligation that the region between her navel and knees be covered in front of all. Women are encouraged to avoid the wearing of revealing, tight fitting and transparent clothing along with that which resembles the clothing of men.

This being said the individuals own adherence to Islam will dictate to what level her dress represents her beliefs and how she views herself. As a foster carer it is important to recognise the child or young person's own individuality and support her to explore her beliefs, faith and culture.

Muslim Males are expected to dress modestly with an obligation that the region between his navel and knees be covered in front of all. Men are encouraged to avoid the wearing of revealing, tight fitting and transparent clothing along with that which resembles the clothing of women.

Some British Muslim young men prefer to wear clothing from the East.

This desire to dress in traditional Arab or Asian dress should be respected and considered within the context of the young person's desire to wear traditional Muslim/cultural dress. Muslim children come from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and have different

styles of clothing which often represents their culture. You may find that the young person may prefer to wear a traditional dress, for e.g. a Pakistani girl may wear shalwar kameez which is a long tunic with trousers. Or she may prefer to wear an Islamic dress which is a long, loose dress which conceals the shape of her body. It is important to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child or young person in a culturally, religiously appropriate and sensitive manner.

Personal Care

Cleanliness is an important part of being a Muslim and the provision of a water container which in most designs has a spout and is used in a similar fashion to a bidet. The young person within your care may appreciate the provision of a water container.

Before prayer the state of purity is important to Muslims and is achieved by washing in a ritualistic manner as laid down by the Prophet Muhammad. The hands are to be washed, the mouth and nasal passage are to be rinsed. The face and forearms and feet are washed alongside the wiping of the head and ears.



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