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## Fact Sheet: What is Islam?

*There is presently an influx of Islamic students coming to Hamilton as international students. The following is a guide to the Islamic faith to assist host families in understanding their student.*

### Islamic Beliefs

Muslims have the following beliefs: one incomparable God – Allah. Allah is the Arabic word for God. Islam rejects characterising Allah in any human form or depicting him as favouring certain individuals or nations on the basis of wealth, power or race.

### History of the Islamic faith

Although Islam began in the Middle East, not all Arabs are Muslims. Only 15% of the world's Muslims are Arabs. There are Arabs who are Christian, Jews and Atheist. Islam is the religion followed by Muslims throughout the world. Islam is not only a religion but a complete way of life. Its origin is the same as that of Christianity and Judaism. The prophets of all three religions are direct descendants from the prophet and patriarch Abraham. Muslim, Christians and Jews share a common religious heritage that includes the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. All three faiths believe in prophets and angels and worship one God.

### Islamic Dress Code (Awrah)

In every society there is a dress code to suit each gender, place etc. The Islamic dress code for males and females is prescribed to be modest. Muslims can wear any national or chosen dress code if it covers certain parts of the body. The Awrah for a male is the part of the body from the naval to the knee, this he can only show to his wife. The Awrah for a female is the whole body with the exception of face and hands. She may only show her body to her husband. However, among Muslim males whom she cannot marry (such as her father, brother, son, uncle or nephews) and all other Muslim women, only her body from the chest down to her knees excluding her arms may not be shown.

### Five Islamic Requirements

As part of the religion, Muslims have five main duties they must perform:

**Declaration of Faith** – that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah (God) and Mohammed is the messenger of God.

**Prayer** - The duty to worship the one god in prayer, five times a day. Prayers of prescribed verses recited in Arabic at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and nightfall.

**Cleanliness** - To perform a prayer a person must be clean. Cleanliness of the body and clothes worn is especially important. Muslims can pray anywhere if the environment is clean. During prayers they cannot talk to anyone, they cannot walk or carry out any action that is not a part of the prayer.

**Alms Giving** – The duty to give alms and to help the needy, for most purposes this involves a payment of 2.5% of one's annual savings which can be distributed to eight groups of people.

**Pilgrimage (Hajj)** -Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, is the duty of each Muslim at least once in a lifetime if financially and physically able.



**Fasting** – For the month of Ramadan all Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, abstaining from bad behaviour such as foul language, bad habits as well as food, drink, and sexual relations. Certain people are exempt from fasting. These include travellers, people who are ill, women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or menstruating.

**Hosts will need to understand that during Ramadan:**

- it is inappropriate to offer food or drinks to a Muslim during fasting hours.
- a family should not take the student to a restaurant or dining area during fasting hours
- asking students to join them at mealtimes should be avoided
- activities during the day/week through Ramadan must be kept to a minimum

**Halal Food**

The meaning of the word halal is “Permitted, allowed, authorised, approved, sanctioned, lawful, legal or legitimate.”

Animals such as cows, sheep, goats, deer, moose, chickens, ducks, game birds etc, are all Halal, but they must be slaughtered according to Islamic Rites in order to be suitable for consumption.

Muslims are taught through the Qu'ran that all animals should be treated with respect and well cared for. The goal is to slaughter the animal, limiting the amount of pain the animal will endure. *Dabīḥah* is the prescribed method of slaughtering all animals excluding fish and most sea-life per Islamic law. When an animal is slaughtered, the jugular vein is cut and the spinal cord is left intact, allowing the blood to drain from the animal. The objective of this technique is to cause the animal to lose consciousness as quickly as possible by cutting the oxygen flow to the brain and therefore inflict the least pain on the animal. Remember, Muslims are prohibited from consuming animal blood.

In addition, halal food must be kept separate from food which is not halal. Cooked in a pan that has not been used for cooking ordinary meat and cut with a knife that has not been used to cut ordinary meat. This is similar to 'kosher' in the Jewish religion.

**Where to find Halal Foods**

As well as most supermarkets now having a separate section for Halal meat, there are many outlets around Hamilton where Halal meat can be purchased.

Aria Farm Ltd	142 Riverlea Road, Hamilton (07) 858 3384
Lishis	Centreplace Foodcourt, Shop 62, Centreplace, Hamilton 021 6333 74
Lishis	Westfield Chartwell, Shop FO5, Westfield Chartwell, Hamilton 021 6333 74
Honey New Zealand	Ltd196 Airport Road, Hamilton (07) 871 4709
Kebabs Salateen	2 Ward Street, Hamilton City, Hamilton 027 2915594
Khyber Foods & Spices	Shop 6, Fifth Ave, 5 Cross Roads, Hamilton (07) 8538011
King Palace	2/52 Alexandria St, Hamilton 021 400 583
NZ Prime Halal Meats	162 Clarkin Road, Hamilton (07) 855 5243
Waikato Butcher	410 Grey Street, Hamilton East (07) 856 2893