



# UNITY IN DIVERSITY: RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AND ITS IMPACT ON DIABETES IN INDIA



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## BACKGROUND

India is an ethnically and culturally diverse nation with 78% comprising of Hindus, 2.5% make up Christianity and 15% Islam, rest being other religions. All the major religions celebrate festivals which include fasting and feasting in addition to other culture bound practices. Each religion celebrates at least 5 major festivals in addition to half a dozen minor celebrations. There is a high degree of communal harmony in most of the states in India to the level that all the festivals are being celebrated by believers of all religions. The chunk of food used to celebrate festivals include Sadhya/Kerala feast, non-veg biriyani etc. high in carb and fat. In addition, marriages in all religions serve food rich in carbohydrates and saturated fats. Denying the food offered by a relative, friend or neighbour is considered disrespect in the Indian society which poses a severe threat to those living with diabetes.

## AIM

We discussed the challenges encountered during various religious and cultural festivals by type 2 diabetes patients who visited our centre for routine evaluation and management of diabetes.

## DISCUSSION

There is a very high level of unawareness on the long term consequences of unhealthy eating habits. Every time, rich food is offered as if it is served rarely; whereas in reality, given the huge number of festivals, functions and marriages, this becomes a daily affair. Mutual respect and friendship between the religions and communities should be highly applauded but awareness should also be created to promote healthy food choices so that living with diabetes does not come as a curse.

## REFERENCE

1. Fasts, feasts, and festivals in diabetes: glycemic management during Parsi rituals. Indian J Endocrinol Metab 2015.

## METHOD

We could identify two categories of patients; one group (18%) who successfully managed to keep their blood glucose under control despite the challenges they faced living with diabetes and the other group (82%) who miserably failed to meet the challenges of living with diabetes. We enumerate some options put forward by those minority of successful patients who could overcome these challenges. (Table: 1)

Table: 1

CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS
Relatives/neighbours forcing to eat unhealthy food	Expose your disease to others
	Develop excellent communication skills to convince friends and relatives
Unhealthy food options being provided	Avoid temptation; say no to food without comprising on friendship and affection
	Ask for healthy vegetarian and non-vegetarian options
	Eat healthy as part of a strong decision
	Make healthy choices at functions and avoid unhealthy foods
	Send greetings via sms, emails, cards and gifts for marriages and festivals and attend only the most essential ones.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

This poster *does not* contain any trade names.

This poster *does not* cover any unapproved uses of specific drugs, other products or devices.

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