

Principles on what invalidates the fast

Based on the article "Dabit al-mufattirat" by mufti Rafi Usmani.



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Introduction

All praise is to Allah, lord of the two worlds and may His peace and blessings be upon our prophet Muhammad, his family and companions.

This is a small treatise on the principles of what invalidates the fast.

It is largely a summary of Mufti Rafi Usmani's brilliant article "Dabit al-mufattirat", in which he explains the principles related to what invalidates the fast. However, it contains changes, in the form of rearrangements and additions to the work of Mufti Rafi Usmani.

Generally, there are two things that can break the fast:

- A substance from outside entering into the body
- Sexual relations

This treatise reflects these two points and is built on two sections:

1. Section 1 deals with what enters into the body.

This section is based on Mufti Rafi Usmani's work.

2. Section 2 deals with sexual relations.

This section is not based on Mufti Rafi Usmani's work, but extracted from reliable books of fiqh.

When dealing with invalidation of the fast then it is important to remember that issues relating to substances entering the body, how they enter and where they end in the body are a medical science and not something exclusively taken from books of fiqh.

It is also important to keep in mind, that whatever invalidates the fast is built upon certain principles. Thus, invalidation of the fast is not something emotional, in the sense that it does not in itself matter whether something enters into the body, the purpose of entry and whether benefit was derived from it or not.

It is solely the principles that determine whether the fast is invalidated or not. If these are present then the fast is invalidated and if they are not present then the fast is not invalidated.

One should remember that even though a certain action may not invalidate the fast, then it does not necessarily entail that one should perform that act. The fast does not just have a form, but also a spirit and the spirit of fasting must be upheld even if the act may not break the fast.

The treatise is based on the Hanafi School.

1 Section 1: What enters into the body

The section on what enters into the body deals with five discussions:

1. The presence of a substance.
2. The place the substance must reach in the body.
3. The point from where the substance must enter.
4. The substance gaining an independent stay.
5. The presence of excuses.

1.1 The presence of a substance

A substance that can invalidate the fast is anything that has a discernable body.

The size of the substance is of no immediate consideration as long as it is something that it is normally visible. The substance can be big and easy to identify, like a lump of meat, or it can be small and not easy to identify, like smoke.

This entails, that things like grain, flour, small drops of water, steam and the like are all considered substances that can invalidate the fast.

It is of no consequence whether the substance has nutritional or medicinal value or not.

It is of no consideration whether the substance is something edible or not, liquid or solid or whether it melts or not.

A sensation in the mouth does not necessarily entail that a substance has entered the mouth.

Smelling something does not necessarily entail that a substance entered the nose.

What will determine whether the substance is invalidating or not is if it has a discernable body, and it is only if the substance has a discernable body that it can break the fast.

Principles:

- ✘ Only a substance with a discernable body invalidates the fast.
 - ✔ That which does not have a discernable body does not invalidate the fast.
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1.2 The place of reaching

In order for the fast to be invalidated then a substance must reach the digestive system of the body.

In this context, the digestive system of the body is composed of:

1. The throat.
2. The stomach.
3. The intestines.

It is these three which are considered in terms of invalidation of the fast. Meaning, that it is only if a substance reaches one of these three that the fast is broken, and if a substance does not reach any of these three then it will not invalidate the fast.

So if a substance entered into the stomach then it would invalidate the fast. But if a substance entered into the finger, thigh or the like then it would not invalidate the fast.

Principles:

- ✘ The fast is invalidated if a substance reaches the digestive system.
 - ✔ The fast is not invalidated if the substance does not reach the digestive system.
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1.3 The point of entry

A substance reaches the digestive system (throat, stomach and intestines) through certain entry points. In this context the body has seven natural points of entry:

1. The mouth.
2. The nose.
3. The ears.
4. The eyes.
5. The anus.
6. The vagina.
7. The urinal passage.

One can add to these:

A. An injury that goes into the body. Here the scholars classically mention two kinds of injuries:

8. A deep head injury (an injury so deep that it reaches the brain).
9. A deep abdominal injury (an injury so deep that it reaches the stomach or intestines).

B. The outer body, since it is possible for the skin to absorb:

10. Pores of the body (the skin of the body).

Thus there are in total 10 entry points into the body that are considered from where a substance can potentially reach the digestive system.

The entry points can have three relations with the digestive system:

- They are directly linked with the digestive system.
- They are indirectly linked with the digestive system.
- They are not linked with the digestive system.

What matters in terms of invalidating the fast is that the substance reaches the digestive system through one of these entry points.

This entails that:

- Whichever entry point that allows a substance to reach the digestive system, whether directly or indirectly is an invalidating entry point. A fast is only invalidated when the substance reaches the digestive system from an invalidating entry point.
- Whichever entry point that does not result in the substance reaching the digestive system will not be considered an invalidating entry point. Therefore, the fast will not be invalidated by anything entering from an entry point that is not considered invalidating.

The outcome is that there are two kinds of entry points:

1. An invalidating entry point

Which is an entry point linked with the digestive system either directly or indirectly.
The fast is only invalidated if the substance comes through this type of entry point.

2. A non-invalidating entry point

Which is an entry point that is not linked with the digestive system neither directly nor indirectly.
The fast is not invalidated if the substance comes through this type of entry point.

If the above is applied on the mentioned entry points then one can draw a table highlighting what is connected to the digestive system and what is not connected to it.

Entry point	Connected with the digestive system	Remark
1. Mouth	Yes	The mouth is directly connected to the throat.
2. Nose	Yes	The nose is directly connected to the throat.
3. Ears⁽¹⁾	No	The ear is not connected to the digestive system at all, unless there is a hole in the eardrum in which case it will be indirectly connected to the throat.
4. Eyes⁽²⁾	No	The eye is not considered connected to the digestive system at all.
5. Anus⁽³⁾	Yes	The anus is directly connected to the intestines.
6. Vagina⁽⁴⁾	No	The vagina is not connected to the digestive system at all.
7. Urinal passage	No	The urinal passage is not connected to the digestive system at all.
8. A deep head injury⁽⁵⁾	No	A deep head injury is not connected to the digestive system at all, unless the basal skull is fractured in which case it will be indirectly connected to the throat.
9. A deep abdominal injury⁽⁶⁾	Yes	A deep abdominal injury is directly connected to the digestive system.
10. Pores of the body	No	The pores are not connected to the digestive system at all. They are considered to absorb the substance and not to let it pass into the body in itself.

⁽¹⁾ Classically the scholars mention the ear as being an invalidating entry point. This is because they considered the ear to be connected with the throat. However, modern day medicine negates any such connection unless there is a hole in the eardrum.

⁽²⁾ Modern day medicine establishes a connection between the eye and the nose. Thereby it should follow that the eye is an invalidating entry point. However, the Muslim scholars treated the eye as a special case, giving it a status similar to the pores of the body, such that the eye is considered to absorb whatever enters into it and thereby what one can taste or sense in the mouth is the effects of the absorption and not the substance itself. Additionally, there are numerous hadith that clarify that the eye is not considered an invalidating entry point, like how the Prophet used antimony (kohl) while fasting. The presence of these hadith also rules out the possibility of considering the eye an invalidating entry point.

⁽³⁾ What matters in relation to the anus is that the substance reaches about a fingers length into the anus, and any chance of that happening is rare.

⁽⁴⁾ Classically the scholars mention the vagina as being an invalidating entry point. This is because they considered the vagina to be connected with the digestive system. However, modern day medicine negates this.

⁽⁵⁾ Classically the scholars mention a deep head injury as being an invalidating entry point. This is because they considered the brain to be connected with the throat. However, modern day medicine negates this unless the basal skull is fractured.

⁽⁶⁾ An injury is not exhaustive in the two mentioned examples. What matters in relation to an injury is whether or not it is connected to the digestive system. The reason why the deep head and abdominal injury is mentioned is only because the scholars classically mentioned them. Otherwise then the ruling of any other injury that reaches the digestive system will be the same as the ruling on the deep abdominal injury.

Based on the table the invalidating and non-invalidating entry points can be identified.

A. The invalidating entry points are:

1. The mouth
2. The nose
3. The anus
4. A deep abdominal injury

It will only invalidate the fast if a substance enters through these and passes on to the digestive system. So it will invalidate the fast to swallow bread. But putting bread into the mouth without it reaching the throat will not be invalidating. Likewise for an asthma pump because it is used at the mouth, which is an invalidating entry point, and therefore it will invalidate the fast.

B. The non-invalidating entry points are:

1. The ears, unless there is a hole in the eardrum.
2. The eyes.
3. The vagina.
4. The urinal passage.
5. A deep head injury, unless the basal skull is fractured.
6. Pores of the body.

It will not invalidate the fast if a substance enters through these whether the body derives benefit from the substance or not. So taking injections in the arm, thigh, buttocks or the like will not invalidate the fast. Likewise for taking eye-drops, because they are used at the eye which is not an invalidating entry point and therefore it will not invalidate the fast.

Principles:

- ✘ Only a substance that enters from an invalidating entry point invalidates the fast.
 - ✔ The fast is not invalidated if a substance enters from an entry point that is not considered invalidating.
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1.4 The manner of stay

The substance can stay in the digestive system in two ways:

1. By staying independently in the digestive system.
2. By being attached to something outside of the digestive system.

The substance only invalidates the fast if it stays independently inside the digestive system. Contrary to if the substance is attached to something outside, in which case it is not considered to have reached the digestive system and it will not invalidate the fast.

So if someone took a raisin and tied it with a thread and then inserted the raisin into the body without letting go of the thread, then that will not be an independent stay in the digestive system and it will not invalidate the fast. Because the raisin would be attached to something that is outside of the digestive system and that would not constitute an independent stay for the raisin inside the digestive system.

Principles:

- ✘ Only an independent stay in the digestive system will invalidate the fast.
 - ✔ Anything that does not have an independent stay in the digestive system will not invalidate the fast.
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1.5 Excuses

If the previously mentioned four criteria are met then it should follow that the fast will be invalidated. However, there are certain excuses that can prevent the fast from being invalidated even if all the other four criteria are met.

1.5.1 Things that are considered an excuse

1. Forgetfulness.

Such that if one were to forget that one was fasting but did something that would otherwise invalidate the fast then it will not invalidate the fast. This is irrespective of how much benefit one gained. So someone who forgetfully drank a little water is equal to someone who forgetfully ate a full meal. In both cases the fast is not invalidated.

2. What is stuck between the teeth from before Fajr.

This applies for food that is stuck in between the teeth from a meal one had before the fast started. In this case one differentiates between the sizes of what is stuck between the teeth:

✓ **Less than the size of chickpea.**

If the size of what was stuck between the teeth is less than a chickpea then it will not invalidate the fast to swallow it.

✗ **Equal to or bigger than the size of a chickpea.**

If the size of what was stuck between the teeth is equal to or bigger than a chickpea then it will invalidate the fast to swallow it.

3. A very small substance that enters into the mouth.

This is a substance the size of a sesame-seed. If something like that entered the throat then there is a distinction between whether it is tasted or not:

✓ **It is chewed such that no taste is found in the throat.**

If the substance was chewed in a manner such that its body disappeared and it could not be tasted then it would not invalidate the fast to swallow it.

✗ **It is chewed such that taste is still found in the throat.**

If the substance was chewed in a manner such that it could still be tasted then it would invalidate the fast to swallow it.

4. Unavoidable substances.

This applies for things that one is not able to guard oneself against and if one were to do so then it would entail unbearable hardship.

Examples include:

- Water that remains in the mouth and nose from wudu.
- Possible damp when one is showering.
- Mucus.
- Snot.
- Saliva.
- Saliva that may end up on the lips from talking.
- Bugs and flies.

- Dust.
- Smog from the traffic.
- Flour from a flourmill.
- What may be in the air when working as a construction worker.

The aforementioned examples are not exhaustive of what can be considered an unavoidable substance.

An unavoidable substance will invalidate the fast if deliberately swallowed or inhaled.

1.5.2 Things that are not considered an excuse

1. Accidents.

Such that if one by accident, while remembering that one was fasting, ended up doing something that would invalidate the fast then it would be considered invalidated.

So if one mistakenly swallowed water while making wudu then that would invalidate the fast.

2. Invalidating the fast out of necessity.

Doing something out of necessity that will invalidate the fast is not considered an excuse that will lift the invalidation of the fast. So if one is feeling sick and drinks water, must take medicine, must use an asthma pump or the like, then it will invalidate the fast.

3. Unawareness.

Being unaware that something will invalidate the fast is not an excuse, even if one would not have done it if one had known that it would invalidate the fast. So if someone did not know that taking medicine will invalidate the fast and therefore took a pill for a headache then that will invalidate the fast. This applies even if one would not have done it if one had known that taking a pill would invalidate the fast.

4. Sleeping.

Such that if one does something while sleeping that would invalidate the fast then it would be considered invalidated. The same applies if something invalidating was done to someone sleeping.

5. Unconsciousness.

Unconsciousness is akin to sleep.

6. Insanity.

Insanity is akin to sleep.

7. Being forced.

Being forced is akin to an accident. The action is still attributed to the person who is forced even if he did not perform it willfully.

Principles:

- ✘ If no excuse is found then the fast is invalidated.
- ✔ If an excuse is found then the fast is not invalidated.

1.6 Conclusion

Summary of principles:

What must be met to invalidate the fast	What will not invalidate the fast
✗ Only a substance with a discernable body invalidates the fast.	✓ That which does not have a discernable body does not invalidate the fast.
✗ The fast is invalidated if a substance reaches the digestive system.	✓ The fast is not invalidated if the substance does not reach the digestive system.
✗ Only a substance that enters from an invalidating entry point invalidates the fast.	✓ The fast is not invalidated if a substance enters from an entry point that is not considered invalidating.
✗ Only an independent stay in the digestive system will invalidate the fast.	✓ Anything that does not have an independent stay in the digestive system will not invalidate the fast.
✗ If an excuse is found then the fast is not invalidated.	✓ If no excuse is found then the fast is invalidated.
! All five above must be met for the fast to be invalidated	! If any one of the above is found then the fast is not invalidated.

There are 5 criteria that must be met for the fast to be invalidated:

1. There is a discernable substance, and
2. The substance reaches the digestive system (throat, stomach or intestines), and
3. The substance enters from an entry point connected to the digestive system (mouth, nose, anus or deep abdominal injury), and
4. The substance gains an independent stay, and
5. No excuse is present.

These five criteria must all be met for the fast to be invalidated. If any of these are not met then the fast is not invalidated.

Likewise, if any of the opposites are found then the fast is not invalidated:

1. There is no discernable substance, or
2. The substance does not reach the digestive system (throat, stomach or intestines), or
3. The substance does not enter from an entry point connected to the digestive system (enters from other than the mouth, nose, anus or deep abdominal injury), or
4. The substance does not gain an independent stay, or
5. An excuse is present.

If any of these five are found then the fast is not invalidated even if all the others were found.

The entire discussion can be summed up as:

“The fast is only invalidated if a substance enters from an entry point that is connected with the digestive system giving the substance an independent stay therein, without the presence of an excuse that could prevent the fast from being invalidated”.

1.7 Common cases

A few practical modern examples of the reached conclusion are outlined below:

Application	Invalidates the fast?	Reason
Acupuncture	No	There is nothing entering from an invalidating entry point.
Asthma pump	Yes	It enters the digestive system from the mouth or nose and they are both invalidating entry points.
Contact Lenses	No	Neither the solution nor the contact lenses themselves invalidate the fast, since they are not used at an invalidating entry point.
Creams and lotions	No	These are only applied on the skin of the body, which is not an invalidating entry point.
Deodorant	No	Applying deodorant does not invalidate the fast, unless one inhales the visible fumes.
Ear drops	No	These do not enter from an invalidating entry point.
Endoscopy	Yes	Endoscopy will invalidate the fast, because it entails the use of a solution sprayed into the throat that will invalidate the fast.
Extracting blood	No	This is extraction from the body and will not invalidate the fast, regardless of the amount.
Eye drops	No	These do not enter from an invalidating entry point.
Injections	No	These do not enter from an invalidating entry point.
Intravenous Drips	No	These do not enter from an invalidating entry point.
Lighting incense	No	Lighting incense does not invalidate the fast, unless one inhales the visible fumes.
Lip balm	No	Applying lip balm does not invalidate the fast, unless one immediately licks the lips and swallows it. If the lips are licked after some time then it will not affect the fast at all.
Makeup	No	This is only applied on the skin of the body, which is not an invalidating entry point.
Mouthwash	Depends	One must take due care that no substance is swallowed. If anything is swallowed then it will invalidate the fast
Nose spray	Yes	These enter the digestive system from the nose which is an invalidating entry point.
Patches	No	These are only applied on the skin of the body, which is not an invalidating entry point.
Pills and tablets	Yes	These enter the digestive system from the mouth which is an invalidating entry point.
Smelling food	No	A smell does not entail that a substance enters the body, unless one deliberately inhales the steam from cooking.
Smelling perfume	No	A smell does not entail that a substance enters the body.
Smoking	Yes	Smoking entails that fumes enter the body from the mouth, which is an invalidating entry point.
Suppository	Yes	It enters the digestive system from the anus which is an invalidating entry point.
Toothpaste	Depends	One must take due care that no substance is swallowed. If anything is swallowed then it will invalidate the fast.
Vaginal examination	No	The vagina is not an invalidating entry point.

2 Section 2: Sexual relations and intimacy

The section on sexual relations deals with two discussions:

1. That which relates to ejaculation, orgasms and intercourse.
2. That which relates to intimacy between the spouses.

2.1 Ejaculations, orgasms and intercourse

1. Intercourse.

Intercourse always invalidates the fast.

It is of no consequence whether the intercourse leads to ejaculation or orgasm or not, or whether one enjoyed it or not.

2. Ejaculation or orgasm without intercourse.

When dealing with ejaculation and orgasms then there is distinction between it being with physical stimulation or without physical stimulation.

✓ **Ejaculation or orgasm without physical stimulation.**

Which is to ejaculate or have an orgasm without any physical stimulation. This will not invalidate the fast. So if someone ejaculated or had an orgasm by a wet dream or merely by looking at his or her spouse then that will not invalidate the fast.

✗ **Ejaculation or orgasm with physical stimulation.**

Which is to ejaculate or have an orgasm through some kind of physical stimulation, whether it is at the private parts or elsewhere. This will invalidate the fast. So if someone touches, kisses or has other physical contact with his or her spouse that results in ejaculation or orgasm then it will invalidate the fast.

If any of this happened forgetfully then it will not invalidate the fast.

Principles:

- ✗ Intercourse always invalidates the fast
 - ✗ Ejaculation or orgasm with physical stimulation invalidates the fast
 - ✓ Ejaculation or orgasm without physical stimulation does not invalidate the fast
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2.2 Intimacy

The different cases of intimacy that could be encountered are outlined below:

1. Thinking.

Thinking about intimacy will not invalidate the fast, even if it is with desire.

2. Looking.

Looking at one's spouse in an intimate manner will not invalidate the fast, even if it is with desire.

3. Talking.

Talking with one's spouse about intimacy will not invalidate the fast, whether it is with or without desire.

4. Kissing.

There are three types of kissing that can be considered:

✓ Non-passionate kissing.

Which is kissing that does not entail an exchange of saliva. This type of kissing will not invalidate the fast, even if it is with desire. So giving one's spouse a light kiss on the lips will not invalidate the fast.

✗ Passionate kissing.

Which is kissing that entails an exchange of saliva. This type of kissing will invalidate the fast, whether it is with or without desire. So French kissing with one's spouse will invalidate the fast, unless it was out of forgetfulness.

✓ Kissing elsewhere on the body.

As long as there is no substance that is swallowed then it will not invalidate the fast to kiss any body part of one's spouse.

So giving one's spouse a kiss on the hand, cheek or forehead will not invalidate the fast.

5. Touching.

Touching one's spouse in an intimate manner will not invalidate the fast, even if it is with desire.

So holding hands or hugging one's spouse will not invalidate the fast.

6. Being sexually aroused.

Being sexually aroused, in itself, will not invalidate the fast.

So having an erection, in itself, will not invalidate the fast.

Intimacy is disliked when there is a fear that it could lead to the invalidation of the fast.

Principles:

✗ Any intimacy that entails swallowing a substance will invalidate the fast

✓ Any intimacy that does not entail swallowing a substance will not invalidate the fast

2.3 Conclusion

Summary of principles:

What invalidates the fast	What will not invalidate the fast
✗ Intercourse always invalidates the fast	
✗ Ejaculation or orgasm with physical stimulation invalidates the fast	✓ Ejaculation or orgasm without physical stimulation does not invalidate the fast
✗ Any intimacy that entails swallowing a substance will invalidate the fast	✓ Any intimacy that does not entail swallowing a substance will not invalidate the fast
! The above points will invalidate the fast unless it was out of forgetfulness.	! The above points do not invalidate the fast, whether done deliberately or forgetfully, with or without desire.

There are three cases that invalidate the fast:

1. Intercourse.
2. Ejaculation or orgasm with physical stimulation.
3. Intimacy that entails swallowing a substance.

If any of these happen then it will invalidate the fast.

There are two cases that do not invalidate the fast:

1. Ejaculation or orgasm without physical stimulation.
2. Intimacy that does not entail swallowing a substance.

If any or all of these happen then it will not invalidate the fast.

The entire discussion can be summed up as:

“The fast is only invalidated by intimacy if it entails swallowing a substance, or ejaculation or orgasm with physical stimulation, or intercourse with or without ejaculation or orgasm”.

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