



The Qur'ân and Prophetic Guidance: An Overview in the Context of New Public Health (2025)

Prof. Dr. G. Husseini Rassool & Jannie Owens

The Qur'ân guides child development, recognizing the importance of breastfeeding in the 7th Century:

"And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling; [...] if both desire to wean by mutual consent and counsel, there is no blame on them, and if you wish to engage a wetnurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised for according to usage; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah and know that Allah sees what you do" (verse 2.233).

It advises steering a young person through childhood into adulthood to create a rounded individual with a strong moral centre.

The Qur'ân promotes healthy eating and avoidance of obesity:

"Eat of the good things we have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein, lest my wrath should justly descend on you, and those on whom descends my wrath do perish indeed" (verse 20.81).

Later chapters discuss further health-promoting guidance on nutrition, oral health, and mental health.

Islâm promotes, at individual and community levels, public health strategies enabling the prevention and containment of the spread of illnesses, plagues, and viruses. Narrated by Abu Huraira, Allâh's Messenger (ﷺ): "The cattle [sheep, cows, camels, etc.,] suffering from a disease should not be mixed up with healthy cattle, (or said: "Do not put a patient with a healthy person)" [as a precaution] ²⁶.

Social quarantine is not a new 21st Century public health innovation to protect people from death, sickness, and epidemics. Over 1,400 years ago, during the Caliphate of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), he advised on the concept of quarantine, instructing his companions to adhere to preventive behaviours. Allâh 's Messenger (ﷺ) refers to the principles of modern quarantine, "If you hear about it (an outbreak of plague) in a land, do not go to it; but if the plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it"²⁷. This is about the prevention and control of disease and

follows a contagion approach to health prevention, which did not occur until the 19th Century in Europe. The basis for the practices of social quarantine and social distancing parallel principles derived from the advice of the Prophet (ﷺ). Another Hadīth reports God's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying, "Flee from one who has tubercular leprosy as you would from a lion"²⁸, to prevent the spread of airborne droplets, bacteria, and viruses. This follows the miasmic theories of infection, present up to the 19th Century. Abu Hurairah discusses the health-related practices of the Prophet (ﷺ) narrating that when he sneezed, he would "cover his face with his hand or with his garment and muffle the sound with it" ²⁹.

Source: Aboul-Enein, B.H., Rassool, G. Hussein., Benajiba, N., Bernstein, J., & Mo'ez Al-Islam E. Faris (2025). *Contemporary Islāmic Perspectives in Public Health*. Cambridge University Press.

