

chatzizah Hefsek Taharah
Chafifah
Immersion
Shiv'a Bath
Nekiim
Bedikah

What are you
feeling?!



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For some women, observance of Taharat Hamishpacha can bring on feelings of



Guilt



Fear



Pressure



Tension



Anxiety

Do you have similar feelings when you think about niddah or preparing and going to the mikveh?



You harbor doubts about whether you are keeping Taharat Hamishpacha properly, and this happens often and unwillingly. This may be the case specifically during the seven clean days, before/after immersion in the mikveh, or even throughout the month.



You regularly seek reassurance from others regarding your doubts, and often turn to a halachic authority even if you know the answers to your questions or have asked similar questions in the past and were told your concerns are not halachically significant.



You delay going to the mikveh and your time in niddah is extended because of your fears and doubts. This may be causing tension in your marriage and family life.

These feelings or behaviors may arise at specific junctures or in the following situations:



Bedikah checks – You are unsure about many of your bedikot and often ask questions about the colors that you find, including colors that you have been told are always permissible. You may repeat your bedikot over and over again because you are not sure if you did them properly, or you wait until you have a totally clear bedikah before starting to count your clean days.



Stains - You are often worried about discharges or stains that you think you see on your body or on objects around you.



Hargashah - (the halachic sensation of menses): You often find yourself doubting whether you had a hargashah which would make you niddah, and this makes you feel stressed or anxious.



Chafifah – (mikveh preparations): Tevilah preparations demand several hours of your time and are physically intense, which exhausts you or makes you dread the whole process.



Iyun – (inspection before immersion): After you have completed all your preparations and before the actual tevilah, you spend a long time checking yourself or do so repetitively, rather than checking for the minute or so that is halachically sufficient.



Tevilah - (immersion): You immerse many times because of doubts whether one of your immersions was invalid, or you go back to the mikveh to immerse after you have already left the building. Even after having returned home, you often have questions about what you see on your body and about the validity of your immersion.

Tips for women who experience stress, anxiety, or obsessive-compulsive thoughts about the observance of Taharat Hamishpacha.

Important note: These tips will hopefully help you observe Taharat Hamishpacha more easily and calmly. If these tips do not help you, please consult a mental health professional for an assessment. Therapy is an effective tool for managing fears and obsessive-compulsive behaviors and can help you learn how to productively cope with your feelings and anxieties. The goals and strategies recommended by your therapist are tailored to you, and therefore may differ from what is presented in this pamphlet.

The following guidelines are not meant for women who are currently in therapy.

Practical tips can help, but more than anything it is important to remember:

"דרכיה דרכי נעם וכל נתיבותיה שלום"

The Torah's ways are pleasant, and all her paths are peaceful.

"לא ניתנה תורה למלאכי השרת"

The Torah was not given to angels (but only to human beings, who are not perfect).

"וחי בהם"

And you shall live (life well) with them (the mitzvot).



Often when we learn the laws of Taharat Hamishpacha, we are not careful to differentiate between halacha and minhag (custom), between standard halachic requirements and chumrot (extra strictures), and between the halacha lechatchila (initially) and bediavad (after the fact). When a halachic doubt arises, it is advisable to check if the concern involves halacha, a minhag, a chumra, or even just an extra hidur (voluntary practice).



The halacha is individualized, and therefore personal challenges are taken into consideration when consulting a halachic authority. Mental distress and anxieties will be carefully factored in when figuring out the best way for an individual to observe the halacha. We encourage you to seek halachic counsel with a Rav or Yoetzet Halacha, so that you may learn the halachic instructions applicable to your situation.

Time in Niddah



Hormonal intervention may cut down the amount of time you are in niddah and also reduce the frequency of your visits to the mikveh. You can consult with your healthcare provider regarding interventions that might be medically appropriate for you.



Halachically, a stain on a colored surface does not make a woman in niddah, regardless of the size or color of the stain. Even if the color of the surface is a light pastel, the stain can be disregarded. However, you may find it easier to wear dark-colored undergarments (and/or black pantliners) and to use dark-colored sheets or towels. This way, the normal stains and marks that are more obvious on light colored surfaces will be less noticeable, and you can avoid the associated anxiety that these stain or marks may cause you.

Becoming Tehorah



If doing bedikot causes you stress or anxiety, you may perform fewer bedikot. You should do the halachic minimum: a hefsek taharah, a single bedikah on day 1, and a single bedikah on day 7. It is advisable to add another bedikah on one of the intermediate days, but not if this will significantly increase your anxiety.



During the clean days you should use pantliners or wear colored underwear.



Allocate a set amount of time for inspection of the bedikah cloth (half a minute at the most).



After deciding that the bedikah is valid, discard the cloth in a place where it will be difficult to retrieve, such as a communal trash can. Alternatively, you can put some makeup, paint, or the like on the cloth so that it will be impossible to check again.

Practical Tips for Immersion



Try limiting the allotted time for preparations for the mikvah. Each part of the preparation should be done in one place and once only. You can speak with a Yoetzet Halacha about the necessary preparations for the mikvah and together work out the most effective and calm way for you to prepare.



If you find something very small on your body which women do not usually remove, you should not view it as a chatzitzah (a halachic barrier to immersion) – whether you found it before or after your tevilah in the mikveh.



If you washed your whole body during the preparation process, and after tevilah you are not sure whether you checked your body properly – there is no need to repeat the tevilah.



Do not repeat the tevilah if you were not instructed to do so by a halachic authority. Many tevilot are kosher even when a question regarding chatzitzah arises.

It is Important to Remember:



Touching the mikveh's wall or floor during immersion does not invalidate the tevilah.



A stray hair on the body is not a chatzitzah for tevilah.

Yoatzot Halacha are available to assist you and respond to your questions on the Golda Koschitzky Women's Halachic Hotline, by email through our website Yoatzot.org or in communities worldwide.