



Nishmat's Miriam Glaubach Center

PESACH 5786

WOMEN'S HEALTH & HALACHA
GUIDE



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We know from our work in communities and on social media that there are many questions that come up around Pesach that don't relate to the halachot of chametz and matza. We are excited to present this booklet for your convenience as you prepare for Pesach. The style of the book aims to maintain the warmth that is customary on our Instagram page and within our global community of followers and readers.

Much of the content in this booklet is adapted from www.yoatzot.org. While we have made every effort to make this pamphlet accessible, there may be some common taharat hamishpacha terms that are not defined. If you would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

As always, theMuch of the content in this booklet is adapted from www.yoatzot.org. contents of this pamphlet have been reviewed by our rabbinic supervisor, Rabbi Kenneth Auman.

Mikveh Preparation

- A few things apply the same way to immersion on Wednesday night, Thursday night and Friday night:
 - Under ordinary circumstances, you should not go to the mikveh on Friday or Yom Tov night if you and your husband aren't in the same location. If there is any chance that he will return on Shabbat or Yom Tov, or if there is another compelling reason not to delay immersion, it is permissible to immerse on Shabbat or Yom Tov.
 - Find out beforehand if you need to make an appointment.
 - Inspect your body for chatzitzot before you immerse.
 - While we know some have a custom to do an extra dunk on Friday or Yom Tov night to make sure their hair is wet for the halachically significant dunk, our posek's opinion is not to do this.
 - Pat (don't wring) your hair dry.
 - Thank the attendant for being there on such a busy night!
- Mikveh on Wednesday night April 1st (First Seder): This is the same as any Friday night, which means you do all your preparation at home beforehand and then go at your appointment time, check yourself over and immerse as per above.
- Mikveh on Thursday night April 2nd (Second Seder):
 - Do all of your preparation on Wednesday, including nail cutting, polish removal, hair removal and combing of hair.
 - Think of ways to minimize getting dirty to avoid chatzitzot that are difficult to remove on Yom Tov. Some find it helpful to wear gloves for food preparation.
 - Any preparation that is allowed on Yom Tov may only begin after the time for candle lighting.
 - After the time for candle lighting, before immersion, wash your body and clean your teeth. Don't rewash your hair since you can't comb it. Rather, separate it with your fingers.
- Mikveh on Friday night night April 3rd:
 - Any preparations that can't be done on Yom Tov, such as cutting nails and combing hair, must be done on Wednesday.
 - Any preparation that is allowed on Yom Tov can be done on Friday (because of the Eruv Tavshilin.)
 - Before Shabbat, wash your body and clean your teeth. Don't rewash your hair since you can't comb it. Rather, separate it with your fingers.
- Mikveh on Motzei Shabbat April 4th: Unlike a regular Motzei Shabbat or Motzei Yom Tov immersion, when you are able do some preparation on Friday or Erev Chag, in the case of a "three day Yom Tov," you prepare entirely after Chag. Begin preparations after havdala and then immerse.

- Mikveh on Tuesday night April 7th: This is the same as any Friday night, which means you do all your preparation at home beforehand and then go at your appointment time, check yourself over and immerse as per above.
- Mikveh on Wednesday night April 8th:
 - Do all your preparations on Tuesday, including nail cutting, polish removal, hair removal and combing of hair.
 - In order to minimize hard to remove chatzitzot, you should make an effort to avoid getting dirty. Some find it helpful to wear gloves for food preparation.
 - Any preparation that is allowed on Yom Tov begins after the time for candle lighting.
 - After the time for candle lighting, before immersion, wash your body and clean your teeth. Don't rewash your hair since you can't comb it. Rather, separate it with your fingers.
- Mikveh on Thursday night April 9th:
 - There are different opinions about when to prepare. Some maintain that it is preferable to do the bulk of the preparations on Tuesday, in order to prevent rushing through the chafifa. If this is your practice, you should still shower and comb through your hair on Motzei Chag and visually inspect your body immediately before immersing. However, others maintain that it is preferable to do the preparations on Motzei Chag, so that the preparation is as close as possible to the tevila. In this is your practice, you must take care to spend half an hour to an hour on the preparations, so as not to rush through them. Even if you do your preparations on Motzei Chag, it is still recommended to do some of the more time-consuming preparations on Tuesday (cutting nails, shaving). Since either way is acceptable, you should do the preparations and take a bath when it is most suitable for you, following the guidelines above.

Bonus tip- you can eat meat the day of your tevila at a Yom Tov meal. Just make sure to clean your teeth before mikveh, in accordance with the way you clean your teeth on Shabbat or Yom Tov.



Seder Night

Pouring Wine at the Seder

One of the harchakot between husband and wife during niddah includes not pouring wine for each other in front of each other. At the same time, there is also a custom not to pour one's own wine at the seder as a symbol of celebration and freedom.

- If someone other than your spouse will be sitting next to you on one side, ask him or her to pour for you. Your husband should do the same. If you have a child who is sitting next to you, asking the child to pour is a great way to avoid this issue and let the child participate in this aspect of the seder!
- When setting the table or after pouring for someone else, try to place the wine on the far side of both you and your husband to facilitate this approach in a less noticeable, awkward way.
- If these solutions aren't possible, and the choice is between your spouse pouring for you or you pouring your own, you should pour your own wine.

Mikveh on Seder Night

There is a halachic preference to prepare for mikveh (chafifa) as close to immersion as possible. In order to best keep this halacha, if you become niddah on March 22nd you may perform your hefsek tahara after 4 days (On Wednesday, March 25th) even if your usual practice is to wait 5 days. This will enable you to go to the mikveh on Wednesday night, soon after you have finished your mikveh preparations. If you are unable to get a clean hefsek tahara on day 4, you are certainly permitted to do one on day 5 or 6 and go to the mikveh a week later.

Please note that, as always, it is worthwhile to bring any questionable bedika to your halachic authority and not to assume that it is a tameh color.

Ideally a woman should immerse at the end of her shiva nekiim, even on Shabbat, and Yom Tov. Leil HaSeder is a unique, very busy night and it often takes some ingenuity, creativity and flexibility to get to the mikveh. A dose of humor is important in this case as well; Remind your husband that he can walk home from shul slowly! Please consult your Rav or Yoetzet to discuss what might be feasible at your local mikveh regarding timing of immersion on Seder night.

If need be, you may tell your host or a relative that you need to go to the mikveh. Telling one person can actually maximize privacy as well as alleviate the stress of the other guests wondering where you are. In many cases, by the time shul is over and the last seder preparations have been made, a woman returning from the mikveh can slip through the door unnoticed.

If none of these suggestions are practical and it is very difficult to get to the mikveh, many halachic authorities say that immersion may be postponed, as long as both spouses are in agreement.

Sexual Relations on Seder Night

Some of you may have heard of the custom to abstain from sex on Rosh Hashana, Shmini Atzeret, the first nights of Pesach, and Shavuot. This custom has kabbalistic origins and definitely doesn't apply on mikveh night or if a couple is trying to conceive. According to our posek at Nishmat, whether to keep this minhag or not is up to each couple. Some couples may feel that following this custom puts a strain on their intimate relationship, while others may find meaning in this minhag, especially those who connect with a more mystical worldview.

Makeup on Shabbat and Yom Tov

For those who wear makeup regularly, immersion scheduled over Yom Tov poses a challenge since you cannot reapply your makeup after immersion.

There is no perfect solution for this challenge. On the one hand, immersing in the mikveh on time is an important value, especially when the delay might be multiple nights. On the other hand, for many it is unpleasant and uncomfortable to spend the rest of the chag without makeup.

Here are a few possibilities to explore in a personal consultation with your halachic authority.

1. Do you have access to halachically acceptable Shabbat makeup that may be applied after mikveh?
2. If your immersion is scheduled for Wednesday night, are you permitted in this specific case to immerse right before Chag? This would allow you to apply your regular makeup after immersion. Please note that this is a p'sak sensitive question and that there are several specific things that must happen, such as your husband being out of the house when you return, in order to make this a viable halachic option. It is important to note that if your posek allows for this, you must contact your local mikveh to verify that they can accommodate you.
3. Does your halachic authority permit immersing with durable, waterproof makeup that won't be damaged by immersion?
4. Is it best in your situation to delay immersion until after Shabbat/Chag? Make sure to include your spouse in the conversation!

Note: Makeup removal is permitted on Shabbat and Yom Tov as long as you are careful not to wring out a wet cloth or wipe.

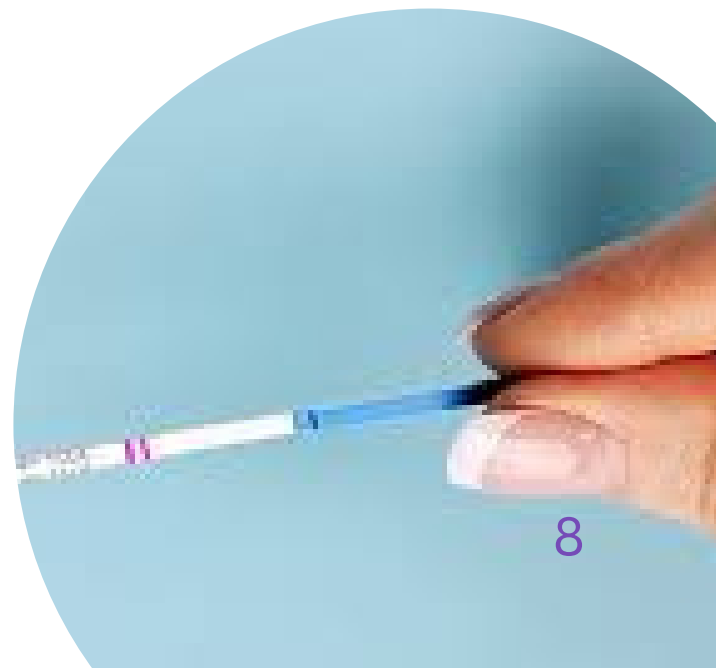


Ovulation Predictor Kits

Ovulation Predictor Kits on Shabbat or Yom Tov

In an ovulation prediction test, urine comes in contact with an indicator, leading to a color change. There is a halachic dispute as to whether this color change creates a problem of tzove'a (dyeing – an activity forbidden on Shabbat). Therefore, you should not perform this test on Shabbat or Yom Tov unless there are mitigating circumstances.

When there are mitigating circumstances, such as trying unsuccessfully to conceive for at least six months (or if you are over 35 and have been testing for three months), and use of the test will provide important information that will help in trying to conceive, then you may rely on the lenient opinions and use the test normally.



Birth Control Pills and Prenatal Vitamins

Birth Control Pills over Pesach

Birth control pills that are swallowed may be taken on Pesach. If your birth control is chewable, please reach out to your halachic authority for further guidance.

Prenatal Vitamins on Pesach

Prenatal vitamins that are swallowed (not liquid or chewable) do not need kosher certification year-round and also do not need special certification for Pesach. If you take a liquid or chewable vitamin, look for one that doesn't contain any chametz in the ingredients.

Chol Hamoed

- If you don't have enough white underwear to last through the second days of Chag, you may launder them during Chol Hamoed.
- You are allowed to cut your nails as part of your mikveh preparation.



FAQ's When Traveling Over Pesach

What do I do if I'm in niddah and we are staying somewhere that only has one bed?

Since a couple may not share a bed during niddah, if you are staying somewhere with only one bed, even though it is unpleasant and probably physically uncomfortable, one of you should sleep on the floor (our posek, Rabbi Auman, recommends that it be the husband on the floor.) If you are amenable, you may ask your hosts if they have a cot or spare mattress available, even if it means they will know you are in niddah.

Let's say I'm not in niddah. Are we allowed to have sexual relations when we're guests in someone else's home? What do we need to know?

You are allowed to have sex while a guest at someone's house as long as you have the privacy of your own room.

- Be sure to be quiet enough that others in the home won't hear you. While the Shulchan Aruch mentions that you shouldn't have sex on the host's sheets, our posek holds that this was true in a time when laundry was much less accessible and people didn't wash linens regularly. In modern times, you don't need to bring your own sheets, since it's assumed that the hosts will wash your linens after you leave. It is good practice to strip the sheets yourselves in order to maintain privacy.
- Keep in mind that you aren't allowed to have sex in front of a sefer Torah (usually not relevant) tefillin, a mezuzah, or seforim unless they are covered with two covers. If you are sleeping in a room with seforim, their binding serves as one cover and it is best to add an additional cover, like cloth or paper. If there are tefillin in the room, they should be kept in a tefillin case and then covered or stored in a drawer. In pressing circumstances where that is not possible, some poskim say a couple may engage in relations under a blanket.
- Often couples share a room with their children while guests in someone else's home, making intimacy a bit challenging to navigate. It is halachically permitted for a couple to engage in relations if their children are in the room, provided that they are asleep. If a couple is sharing a room with a baby who isn't old enough to speak, they may be intimate even if their baby is awake. Of course, if this does not feel comfortable for one or both spouses, they should not feel any stress or pressure to engage in sexual activity.

What do I do if I need to immerse and I'm somewhere that doesn't have a mikveh?

- If your mikveh night is on Wednesday night, it is possible you will be allowed to immerse earlier in the day on Wednesday before you arrive at your destination for Chag. The logistics of this can be complicated because you won't be able to see your husband until nightfall, but sometimes it can be done. Please contact your halachic authority if this applies to you.
- If your mikveh night is Thursday night or Friday night, you will wait until Chol Hamoed to immerse. Once you are done counting your shiva nekiim, even though you have not yet immersed, do not do any more bedikot and switch to wearing colored undergarments.

What should I do if I need to immerse and there's no mikveh but there is a natural body of water?

- First, check <https://mikvah.org>'s worldwide mikveh directory. Perhaps there is a mikveh nearby!
- If there isn't a man-made mikveh, you may be able to use a natural body of water. It is important to verify that the body of water is a kosher mikveh, as not all lakes, rivers and oceans fit the criteria to be a kosher mikveh.
- In order to make sure your immersion is valid, make sure that you will be immersing somewhere safe, private, well-lit and relatively mud free, as mud stuck to the feet is a chatztitza.
- In order to maintain your safety as well as confirm that you are completely submerged in the water, your tevila must be supervised by a halachically observant, Jewish woman over Bat Mitzvah. If a qualified woman is not available, your husband can watch you tovel.
- Enter the water wearing a loose fitting, easily removable garment. Once you are in the water remove it and tovel as usual. If it is too difficult for you to take it off while in the water, you may keep it on.

How to Contact a Yoetzet Halacha

- [Speak to a Yoetzet in Your Community](#)
- [Ask a Question on yoatzot.org](#)
- [Call the Golda Koschitzky Women's Halachic Hotline](#)
- [Set Up a Consultation with a Yoetzet Halacha Fertility Counselor](#)





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