



June 2017 /Sivan 5777

Common Questions Frum Patients Should Ask of Doctors

Dear Reader:

There are many situations in many areas of life in which *halakha* and medicine intersect, but this is especially so in the area of *Taharat Hamishpakha*, or family purity. In this issue, we will focus on some of the most common questions women ask a *yoetzet halakha*, for which she advises them to reach out to their doctors.

Q: I recently started a new pill. I had one typical cycle, and then, when I came home from the mikvah, I started staining. What should I do? Is this normal? My doctor did say I might have some staining, but I have never stained before and am concerned. Should I call my doctor?

A: Whenever a woman has a doubt about whether or not she should call her doctor, I would always advise her to call her doctor. Being in touch with the physician who knows the woman's medical history can be helpful; additionally, the doctor can track her concerns. If she calls again with the same concern, the doctor can remind her that she had spoken about it before and be particularly understanding that this is something she is very worried about. In this particular case, it would be important to note the following factors: Where was the staining, how much did she see, and where she is in her cycle when she saw it? If she is taking the active pills and she is wearing colored underwear, assuming she did not have an actual flow, she would not be in *niddah*.

However, I would recommend that the woman abstain from marital relations while she is staining and for 24 hours after. This precaution is in place to prevent her from seeing blood after intercourse, in which case she might be in *niddah*. When a woman is staining, these are the recommendations I make: she should not wear anything white made from cotton. If she is wearing white cotton underwear (or any undergarment) and sees blood that is red, larger than the size of a penny and cannot be attributed to a wound, she would be in *niddah*. It is important when a woman is taking the pill to be consistent about taking it around the same time every day.

Q: I recently gave birth to a baby and am considering different types of birth control. What do you suggest?

A: When a woman contacts me with this type of question, my first response is to tell her to consult with her doctor. There are many different types of birth control on the market, and some women are better candidates for specific types of birth control than for others because of their family or personal medical history. Only a woman's doctor can effectively assess that information with her. Moreover, I would never "suggest" a specific type of birth control. My role is to inform the woman of the *halakhic* implications of each of the different types of birth control so that she, together with her husband and doctor, can make the best decision.

From a *halakhic* standpoint, if a method does not prevent sperm from entering the woman and there is no barrier during intercourse, that method would be permissible. A condom is not allowed because it both prevents sperm from entering the woman and is a barrier. Another form of birth control is the diaphragm (<http://www.webmd.com/sex/birth-control/diaphragm-birth-control>). There is a debate among *rabbanim* about this type of birth control. Some will not permit it, because, while it is not a barrier method, the sperm does not enter the uterus. Others will permit it, as the sperm still enters the vaginal tract.

Sometimes, a woman might consider taking the pill (<http://www.webmd.com/sex/birth-control/birth-control-pills>). This type of birth control fulfills the *halakhic* criteria and is, in fact, one of the most widely accepted form of birth control from a *halakhic* perspective. But sometimes the pill can cause staining when a woman first begins taking it. In that case, it is important to remember to not wear white underwear, accept when necessary, for example, during the 7 blood-free days, and to ask a *halakhic* authority should any questions arise. Missing a pill or taking a pill late can sometimes cause staining.

Other women may use a hormonal intrauterine device, otherwise known as the mirena -<https://www.mirena-us.com/>. One of the most common questions about the mirena concerns staining when the mirena is first inserted. For the first 24 hours after insertion, we treat the bleeding as a wound due to the insertion; thus, any blood a woman would see would not render her *niddah*. If bleeding persists past 24 hours, it is important to consult a *halakhic* authority. A woman may need guidance in navigating any continued staining, as bleeding sometimes can occur for 6-8 weeks after insertion, in determining whether it will render her *niddah*.

Some women may choose to use a non-hormonal type of birth control, such as the paragarad (<http://paragard.com/>). From a *halakhic* standpoint, this is a fine method. However, it can sometimes cause longer periods and/or staining in between periods. In this case, a woman should consult a *halakhic* authority to determine if the staining would render her *niddah*.

In addition to discussing the best form of birth control with her doctor, she should also consult with a *halakhic* authority about the different considerations of when a woman may use birth control and what type she should use. In addition to educating a couple about the *halakhic* considerations, sitting down with a *halakhic* authority to discuss birth control often expands and improves communication between them.

Q: Recently, I experienced bleeding after intercourse. I assumed at the time that I was in *niddah*, so I waited 5 days and then counted 7 *nekiim* and went to the mikveh. My husband and I had intercourse again, and I had some discomfort and then bled again. What should I do? I am worried that I will get my period soon, and then I will have been in *niddah* for close to 6 weeks.

A: In a situation like this I would recommend that the woman go to the doctor for an exam. It is important to determine if this blood is uterine or is due to some other cause such as cervical or vaginal. If it is uterine, I would ask the woman to ask her doctor if there is any explanation for the uterine bleeding specifically after intercourse. If it the bleeding is not uterine but rather due to a wound, she would not be in *niddah*. In this case, there may be tips and suggestions the doctor can provide to help the woman. Sometimes, a woman's uterine lining can become sensitive or the woman may have a polyp. There are a myriad of possible causes of atypical bleeding (see <http://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/vaginal-bleeding/basics/causes/sym-20050756>). It is important to ask the right questions when going to the doctor to receive the best guidance. She should also ask what type of exam the doctor will use to determine the source/cause of the bleeding. What type of instrument will be used during the exam? Will the cervix be dilated? If so, how much? Knowledge is power in this situation, and the more she knows the more likely the woman will receive the most appropriate *halakhic* answer.

I hope this newsletter addressed some questions you may have. If you have any personal questions, or would like to see specific questions or topics addressed in this newsletter, please reach out to me at 718-614-2677 or bracharutner@gmail.com.

YOETZET HALAKHA IN KEMP MILL

Yoetzet Halakha Bracha Rutner will be returning to Kemp Mill the Shabbat of June 17.

MIKVAH HOURS, WALLERSTEIN MIKVAH

Wallerstein Mikvah (Women Only)

There are no appointments at the Wallerstein Mikvah, except for Friday evenings. For any other assistance, leave a message on the mikvah answering machine and someone will contact you within 24 hours.

Friday nights and Yom Tov nights: call 301-681-3737 to schedule.
For immediate assistance, please call Robin Niman at 240-381-7862.

June

Sunday - Thursday: 9:15 - 11:15 p.m.

Motsaei Shabbat: 10:15 - 11:45 p.m.

Kallot (brides) should please call the Yitzchak Wallerstein Mikvah to schedule their appointments.

HAKARAT TOV

We'd like to thank Kenneth and Cheryl Jacobson for their generous donation supporting this monthly newsletter. We'd also like to thank our anonymous donor, who has allowed to engage Bracha Rutner for

educational programming throughout the year and to be accessible to women in the Kemp Mill community for questions.

JCADA



If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic or dating abuse, please contact JCADA for support.

Call toll free: 1-877-88-JCDA FREE (52232)

Confidential Client Lines: MD: 301-315-6041.

E-mail: jcada@jcada.org

<https://www.kmsynagogue.org/yoetzet-halacha.html>