

Recommended acts of ritual bath (Ghusl)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

When is it better, but not required, to perform ghusl?

There are certain occasions when it is recommended and rewardable for a Muslim to perform ghusl. Some of them are listed here:

- For the Friday Prayer (Salaat ul-Jumu'ah in Arabic).
It is better to perform ghusl on Friday before the Jumu'ah prayer.¹ The time extends between Friday dawn and the time of the Jumu'ah prayer. Although it may not be possible for many to perform ghusl right before Jumu'ah due to work or school, they can do so before they leave in the morning. If one breaks his wudoo' after performing ghusl, it is sufficient to make new wudoo' without bathing again.
- For the Bi-annual 'Eed prayers.
A Muslim is encouraged to perform ghusl for 'Eed prayers. Many reports from the Companions have been reported regarding this matter.
- On entering Makkah. It is preferable for whoever wants to enter Makkah to perform ghusl.²
- Ghusl after washing a corpse. Performing ghusl is preferred for one who has washed a corpse.³

Ghusl for women

A woman bathes as outlined above, except that if she has braided hair she does not have to undo it, provided the water can reach the roots of her hair.⁴ It is sufficient for her to pour

¹ The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) said, "Whoever makes the ablution and perfects it and then goes to the Friday prayer and listens attentively, will be forgiven during the period between the Friday and the next Friday, and an additional three days." [Saheeh Muslim]

² Nafi' reported that Ibn Umar never entered Makkah without spending the night at Dhi Tawu until it was dawn, when he took a bath, and then entered Makkah in the morning. He (Ibn Umar) mentioned that the Messenger of Allaah used to do that. (The two Saheehs. This version is from Saheeh Muslim)

³ The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) is reported to have said, "Whoever has washed a corpse must perform ghusl, and whoever carried him must perform ablution." (Musnad, Aboo Daawood, Al-Tirmidhee, Nisaa'ee, Ibn Maajah)

⁴ Umm Salamah, the Prophet's (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) wife said, "O Messenger of Allaah, I am a woman who has closely plaited hair on my head. Do I have to undo them for ghusl after sexual intercourse?" He said, "No, it is enough for you to throw three handfuls of water on your head and then pour water over yourself. After doing this, you shall be cleansed." (Musnad, Saheeh al Bukhaaree, and Al-Tirmidhee)

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water over her head three times, making sure that water completely reaches the roots of her hair. Also, nail polish or any other agent which prevent water from reaching the body parts must be removed at the time of ghusl.⁵

It is preferable for a woman, after performing ghusl due to menstruation or post-childbirth bleeding, to take some cotton smeared with fragrance and wipe her private parts, in order to cleanse herself from the odour of the menstrual blood.⁶

Ghusl is not required in the following two cases:

- Normal vaginal discharge. It is normal for a vagina to be naturally moist with a kind of mucus. It changes throughout the monthly cycle in response to the body's hormone production. Most normal young and older women have a white, sticky discharge called leucorrhea, a liquid quite distinct from orgasmic fluid. It's normal for women to get a little discharge on their clothing. The secretions can be more inclined to wetness or dryness, and be more or less thick or viscous. These secretions may turn white or yellow when exposed to the air. Normal vaginal fluids can have a mild scent, or no aroma at all, and can be clear or milky white when moist, yellowish in colour when dried, and mucus-like or stringy in consistency. They can be heavier during mid-cycle, when ovulation occurs, during pregnancy, and when using birth control pills. Ghusl is not required in such cases.
- Foreplay, thinking about intercourse and sexual arousal causes veins to dilate. This swelling creates a "sweating reaction," producing a fluid that lubricates the vagina and wets the entrance. The combination of vaginal mucus and lubrication makes up women's sexual secretions. It can be white and thin and is not followed by feeling of exhaustion. This fluid is called madhiy in Arabic. Ghusl is not required in this case as well.

A woman is considered sexually impure and must perform ghusl in two cases:

- Insertion of the penis in the vagina, even if there is no ejaculation, renders both husband and wife sexually impure. Both require ghusl to resume worship.
- Emission of the vaginal fluid called manyi due to wet-dream⁷ and female orgasm.

⁵ This is based on the order of Allaah to wash faces and hands, etc (make wudoo') in Qur'aan [5:6] before prayer. According to the scholars, washing implies that water must actually reach the skin, so any insulating product covering it should be removed.

⁶ A female companion asked the Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) about ghusl after menstruation has ended. He said, "She should use water mixed with the leaves of the lote-tree and cleanse herself. Then she should pour water over her head and rub it well till it reaches the roots of the hair, after which she should pour water over it. Afterwards, she should take a piece of cotton smeared with musk and cleanse herself with it." (Aboo Daawood, Ibn Maajah, and others)

⁷ Wet-dreams in women is little studied even today, but confirmed by Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) 1400 years ago. In 1953, Alfred Kinsey, Ph.D., a sexuality researcher, found that nearly 40 percent of the 5,628 women he interviewed experienced at least one nocturnal orgasm (orgasms during sleep), or "wet dream," by the time they were forty-five years old. A smaller study published in the *Journal of Sex Research* in 1986 found that 85 percent of the women who had experienced

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A woman has to do ghusl if she experiences an erotic dream and notices moisture when she wakes up.

Also, ghusl becomes obligatory when maniyy is produced after female orgasm due to any other reason for that matter. Orgasm is the climax of sexual activity accompanied by vaginal contractions and other changes in the body, and commonly results from sexual intercourse.⁸

Certain indicators like smell and colour distinguish maniyy from normal vaginal discharge. Women's maniyy, the fluid which requires ghusl, is known by several qualities:

- it is released as a result of feeling sexual pleasure and a woman feels excitement when it is produced.
- it is followed by a feeling of exhaustion.
- it has a particular odour.⁹
- it is usually yellow and non-viscous. It can be white.

The first two qualities are perhaps the most important indicators. Vaginal discharges described above that do not meet the characteristics of maniyy do not require ghusl, but do require wudoo'.

General guidelines for ghusl

- Husband and wife may bathe together, but it is immodest and forbidden to bathe nude or in bathing suits publicly. It is forbidden to uncover one's private parts except to one's spouse or for medical treatment.
- It is sufficient to perform one ghusl for two reasons, such as for sexual impurity and the Friday prayer, provided one has the intention for both of them.
- It is sufficient for a person to perform ghusl even if he did not perform ablution within it.
- It is perfectly permissible for a person in post-sexual impurity (junub) or for a menstruating woman to remove hair, cut their nails, go shopping, and so on, and it is not considered a reprehensible act.
- It is permissible for the spouses to use the water left over by the other just as it is permissible for them to perform ghusl from the same container.
- A husband and wife do not have to perform ghusl immediately after intercourse. If done after 'the night prayer, it is permissible to delay bathing until the time of Fajr. In this case, it is recommended to perform wudoo' before sleeping.

nocturnal orgasms had done so by the age of twenty-one... some even before they turned thirteen. Vaginal secretions could be a sign of sexual arousal without orgasm.

⁸ In most women, fluid is not ejaculated in female orgasm, but often vaginal wetness is experienced. In some women, "ejaculation" of a clear fluid is believed to be produced by the Skene's glands similar in composition to a man's prostate gland. It is produced during orgasm and is not urine. It is similar in composition to semen, only without the sperm. This fluid differs from a woman's secretions during arousal.

⁹ Even though it may be unfamiliar to many readers, it is described to be like that of palm tree pollen or the smell of dough.

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