

Menstruation

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Introduction

There are special regulations in Islaam legislated for women regarding the three types of bleeding they experience, that are menses, post-partum bleeding, and abnormal bleeding. Women must understand the rulings pertinent to each type, as they deal with important aspects of worship, such as purification, prayer and fasting. This lesson will try to explain the most important rulings relevant to each type of bleeding.

Menstruation

Menstruation is the release of blood and tissue through the vagina that occurs on a monthly cycle, not due to specific events such as birth or breakage of the hymen. Menstrual periods usually occur once a month and last for several days. Blood loss due to menstrual flow may vary from month to month. Women typically use sanitary napkins (pads) or tampons to absorb menstrual flow. Menstrual blood is almost always dark colour and not bright.

Post-Childbirth bleeding

Such bleeding occurs after the event of birth or miscarriage. It has no minimum duration, but it may even last up to forty days. Umm Salamah said:

“During the lifetime of the Prophet, the post-childbirth woman would seclude herself for forty days.”¹

A woman experiencing post-childbirth bleeding has to stop praying for forty days unless her bleeding stops before that. If her bleeding stops before that time, she is to perform the ritual bath (ghusl) and start praying. If she sees blood after forty days, most scholars say that she is not to stop praying. The blood of postpartum bleeding is also almost always dark.

Forbidden Acts

Divine wisdom has exempted women from certain religious duties due to various reasons associated with bleeding. The following is a list of acts which are forbidden during menstruation and post-childbirth bleeding:

¹ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree

Menstruation

Formal Prayer (Salaah)

A woman experiencing her period or post-childbirth bleeding is not to perform her prayers, whether obligatory or voluntary, and those prayers which are missed due to this reason are not to be made up at a later time.

If her blood flow starts after the time for a certain prayer begins, for example, half an hour after the time for Dhuhr prayer (Salaah), then, after her bleeding ends, she should make up that Dhuhr prayer, since she was pure when the prayer became obligatory upon her. She should not, however, make up the prayers she missed while she is bleeding.²

If there is enough time left to pray at least one unit of prayer (rak'ah) after performing the ritual bath, she should pray that prayer, because the Prophet said:

“Whoever catches with one unit of prayer (rak'ah) before the sun rises has caught the Fajr prayer, and whoever catches with one rak'ah before the sun sets has caught the 'Asr prayer.”³

Example: if she performs the ritual bath after the completion of her bleeding at the time of 'Asr and there is enough time left before sunset for her to pray unit of prayer, then she should pray 'Asr.

Fasting

It is forbidden for a woman experiencing menstruation or postpartum bleeding to fast, whether it be for Ramadhaan or voluntarily, but unlike the formal prayers she must make up the missed days of Ramadhaan.

Sexual intercourse

It is forbidden to have sexual intercourse while a woman is menstruating or experiencing postpartum bleeding, although other types of intimacy are allowed. As for anal intercourse, it is forbidden at all times. The Prophet, may Allaah praise him, was asked “What is it permissible for me to do with my wife when she is menstruating?” He said:

“Do as you wish except for sexual intercourse.”⁴

² The Prophet said, “... when she is menstruating she does not pray or fast.” (Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Saheeh Muslim)

³ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Saheeh Muslim

⁴ Saheeh Muslim

Menstruation

Touching a copy of the Qur'aan

It is forbidden to touch a copy of the Qur'aan when one is in any state of impurity, because Allaah says:

[“... which none can touch except the purified.”]⁵

The Prophet told the people of Yemen:

“No one should touch the Qur'aan except one who is pure.”⁶

Permissible Acts

- (1) Reciting the Qur'aan from memory.
- (2) Supplicating (du'aa).
- (3) Engaging in dhikr: remembering Allaah with specific words like Subhaanallaah, Allaahu Akbar, and others.
- (4) Reading books of hadeeth or any other Islaamic books.

One should keep in mind that it is permissible to read and touch a translation of the Qur'aan, as it is not the word of Allaah but rather a translation of its meanings, even if it has Arabic in it.

End of Menstruation

A woman can know that her bleeding has ended by two things:

1. The white discharge that indicates the bleeding is over.
2. Complete dryness if a woman does not have this white discharge. In this case she can find out if her bleeding has ended by inserting a piece of white cotton or something similar; if it comes out clean, then her bleeding is over. If the cloth comes out red, yellow or brown, her bleeding has not ended.

A woman must perform the ritual bath after her bleeding ends before she may pray, make up her fasts, or resume sexual relationship with her husband. She may bathe during her bleeding, but here we are referring to a separate ritual bath (ghusl) which must be performed at the end of the bleeding in order for a person to resume worship.

⁵ Qur'aan [56:79]

⁶ Maalik, an-Nasaa'ee, Ibn Hibbaan, al-Baihaquee

Menstruation

Drops of Blood after a Woman Has Purified Herself

Umm 'Atiyah said: "We used to not regard the yellowish and brownish discharge after the white discharge indicating that the period is over as being of any significance." Based on this, this brownish discharge that comes before the period is not part of the period, especially if it comes before the usual time of menstruation and there are no other signs of menstruation such as cramps, backache, etc. So it is better for her to make up the prayers that she missed during this time.

If the period of a woman ends and she sees the white discharge which signals that her period has indeed ended, then any brownish or yellowish discharge that she sees after that, or any drops or wetness, is not menses, so it does not prevent her from praying, fasting or having intercourse with her husband. But she should not rush until she has seen that she is pure, because some women, when the bleeding lessens, rush to bathe before seeing the white discharge.

Also if a woman has a regular cycle of a certain number of days, any blood seen after that is considered false menstruation, and she should perform the ritual bath and pray, even if she does not see any white discharge. Any abnormal bleeding is also considered false menstruation.