

Home > The Ritual Ablutions for Women > Istihazah – The Irregular Bleeding > 6. Is Anything Forbidden To The Mustahazah?

Istihazah – The Irregular Bleeding

1. Definition Of Istihazah

You have come across the word *istihazah* many times in the first part of this book. In this part we shall exclusively discuss about *istihazah*.

Istihadah is usually translated as "irregular menstruation". But this translation is incorrect, because it may create a confusion with *muztaribah* = "a woman whose menstrual pattern is irregular"; and also because *istihazah* is not menstruation at all. In Islamic terminology *istihazah* means any blood discharged from women which is not from menstruation, loss of virginity, postnatal bleeding or internal injury. The woman who has *istihazah* is known as *mustahazah*.

The signs: *Istihazah* usually has the following four signs:

1. it is cool,
2. yellow in colour,
3. thin in substance, and
4. it is discharged without pressure or burning sensation.

All these signs are opposite the signs of menstruation.

Although these are the signs which usually appear in *istihazah*, sometimes it is quite possible for it to appear without some or all of them.

Unlike *hayz*, there is no minimum or maximum limit for the discharge of *istihazah*. Neither is there any specific time in a woman's life-time during which it appears –it can come before a girl becomes nine years old and after a woman has entered the age of menopause. Nor is there a minimum duration between the occurrence of two *istihazah*.

2. Three Types Of Istihazah

By considering the amount of blood in *istihazah*, it is divided into three categories: *Qalilah*, *Mutawassitah* and *Kathirah*.

1. ***Qalilah = Slight Bleeding***: The discharge which stains the cotton but does not penetrate into it.
2. ***Mutawassitah = Medium Bleeding***: The discharge which penetrates into the cotton but does not flow out from it.
3. ***Kathirah = Profuse Bleeding***: The discharge which penetrates into the cotton and flows out from it.

In *istihazah* it is possible for the discharge to change from one level to another; for example, in the beginning it was *qalfiah* and then it became *kathirah*, or vice versa.

It is obvious that if a *mustahazah* woman wants to follow the rules of *istihazah*, she must examine herself to determine whether she is *qallah*, *mutawassitah* or *kathirah*.

3. The Prayers Of The Mustahazah

Istihazah is a *najasat* (impurity) which is different from *hayz*. The woman in *istihazah* is not exempted from prayers. She has to pray, but the validity of her prayers depends on fulfilling the acts which are required of her.

In this chapter we shall explain the rules which a *mustahazah* has to observe daily for her salats.

The Qalilah:

A woman with *istihazah qalilah* has to change the sanitary napkin or towel and perform wudu' for each and every salat whether it is wajib or mustahab.

In this and the subsequent cases, if the sanitary napkin has not become najis, then it is not necessary to change it.

The Mutawassitah:

A woman with *istihazah mutawassitah* has to change the sanitary napkin, perform wudu' for every salat and perform in addition a ghusl before the dawn prayer.

If the medium bleeding of *istihazah* starts after the dawn prayer, then on that day it is wajib on the *mustahazah* to perform a ghusl before the noon prayer. And if it starts after the noon and afternoon prayers, then it is wajib on her to do the ghusl before the evening prayer.

If the medium bleeding of *istihazah* starts after noon prayer (and before afternoon prayer) or after

evening prayer (and before night prayer), then it is wajib on her to perform the ghusl before afternoon or night prayer.

In the same way, if a woman sees *istihazah mutawassitah* before the dawn prayer and does not perform ghusl, then she has to do ghusl before noon prayer and repeat her dawn prayer after the ghusl.

The Kathirah:

A *kathirah* has to change the sanitary napkin before every salat and perform three ghusls – the first before dawn prayer, second before noon and afternoon prayers, and the third before evening and night prayers. It is not wajib for a woman with *istihazah kathirah* to perform wudu' for every salat as the ghusl is sufficient.

If a woman sees *istihazah kathirah* after the dawn prayer, then on that day she has to do two ghusls – one before noon prayer and the other before evening prayer.

If she sees *istihazah kathirah* after afternoon prayer, then on that day she will have to do one ghusl only before the evening prayer.

If she sees *istihazah kathirah* between noon and afternoon prayers or between evening and night prayers, then on that day she has to perform the ghusl before afternoon or night prayers.

The *mustahazah kathirah* should combine the noon and afternoon prayers after the second ghusl, and also the evening and night prayers after the third ghusl. It means that if a woman performs ghusl before noon prayer and does not combine the recitation of noon and afternoon prayers, then she will have to do a separate ghusl for afternoon prayer also. The same rule applies if she recites the evening and night prayers separately.

4. Some General Rules

It is wajib on the *mustahazah* to perform the prayer or prayers immediately after the wudu or ghusl. Of course, she is permitted to perform the mustahab acts before, or during, the prayer.

On the other hand, if the *istihazah* has stopped completely and the woman has already performed what was required of her, then it is not wajib for her to perform her prayers immediately after the wudu or ghusl.

It is also wajib on the *mustahazah* to prevent the blood from coming out of the vagina during the prayer by placing a sanitary napkin over it. If she does not take necessary precaution in this matter and the blood comes out of vagina during the prayer, then she will have to repeat her prayer. In this case of negligence, if she has medium or profuse *istihazah*, then it is precautionarily wajib on her even to repeat the ghusl or ghusls.

If the *istihazah* stops completely before the woman has performed the wudu or ghusl which was required of her, then what is her duty in regard to those acts?

It is wajib for her to perform the acts which were required of her before she became pure. Likewise, if the blood stops during the wudu or ghusl or salat, it is wajib on her to perform the wudu or ghusl or the prayer again. Even if the blood stops after she has performed her prayers but there still is enough time to do wudu or ghusl and pray, then it is wajib for the woman to perform those acts again.

If a *mustahazah* knows that the bleeding will stop at a time when she will have enough time to perform her wudu or ghusl and pray (without making them *qaza*), then it is wajib for her to delay her prayers until she becomes pure. For example, the time of noon and afternoon prayers ends at 5:00 p.m. and the woman has a feeling that her blood will stop before 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. In this case she should delay her noon and afternoon prayers, and perform the wudu or ghusl and pray after she has become pure.

On the other hand, if her *istihazah* started after the time of prayers while she had not yet prayed, then she will have to pray that salat after performing the wudu or ghusl which is required of her. For example, the time of noon prayer commenced at 12:30 p.m. and her *istihazah* started at 3:00 p.m. In this case she had had enough time from the commencement of noon prayer's time to perform her prayers normally. If she did not do so, then she will have to follow the rules of *istihazah* to perform that prayer.

If the discharge changes from one level to the other, then what should a *mustahazah* do?

If it changes from a lower level to a higher level (e.g., from slight to medium bleeding, or from medium to profuse bleeding), then there are two possibilities:

1. The change occurred before performing the acts required of her, then she should perform those acts according to the rules of the higher level *istihazah*, and there is no need to repeat the previous acts of worship.
2. The change occurred while she was performing the acts which were required of her, then she has to start those acts all over again according to the rules of the higher level *istihazah*. This law applies even if the change occurs during prayers.

If it changes from a higher level to a lower level (e.g., from profuse to medium bleeding, or from medium to slight bleeding), then the *mustahazah* will have to follow the rules of the higher level *istihazah* for the first prayer and then follow the rules of the lower level *istihazah* for the subsequent prayers. For example, a *mustahazah kathirah* becomes *mustahazah qalilah* before noon, then she will have to perform a ghusl and then pray noon and afternoon prayer (according to the rules of *kathirah*) but for evening and night prayers she just has to perform separate *wudu's* (according to the rules of *qalifah*).

5. How The Mustahazah Should Fast?

The *mustahazah* has to pray and fast like every other woman. The only difference is that her acts of worship will not be valid unless she observes the rules mentioned above.

In case of the women with medium *istihazah*, the validity of their fasts is dependent upon the ghusl which they are required to perform before the dawn prayer. (This rule is based on ihtiyat mustahab—precautionarily recommendation.)

The validity of the fasts of the women with profuse *istihazah* depends on the ghusls which they are required to perform during the entire day.

6. Is Anything Forbidden To The Mustahazah?

Among the acts forbidden to the ha'iz and junub, only one is forbidden for *mustahazah*: She is not permitted to touch the writings of the Qur'an before *wudu* and ghusl. Rather even after the *wudu* and ghusl, it is precautionarily wajib on her to refrain from touching the writings of the Qur'an.

Of course, there is no harm if a *mustahazah* woman enters and stays inside a mosque or reads those parts of the Qur'an which have wajib sajdahs.

There is no restriction, whatsoever, on sexual intercourse for a *mustahazah* with slight bleeding. As far as the *mustahazah* with medium and profuse bleeding are concerned, sexual intercourse is lawful only if they have performed the ghusl or ghusls which are required of them. (This rule is based on precautionarily recommendation.)

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