NISHMAT HA-BAYIT

Contemporary Questions on Women’s Reproductive Health Addressed by Yoatzot Halacha
The Nicole and Raanan Agus Edition

NISHMAT HA-BAYIT

Contemporary Questions on Women's Reproductive Health
Addressed by Yoatzot Halacha

Edited by Rabbi Yehuda-Herzl and Chana Henkin

Maggid Books
Nishmat
OU Press
In memory of

Mrs. Chaya Kimelman

Dedicated by her family and friends

Chaya Kimelman was born in Melbourne, Australia, and lived there until making aliyah in her 70’s. “Big Grandma,” as she was known to her grandchildren and their friends, was active in community hesed programs, such as preparing kosher meals for hospital patients and delivering kosher Meals on Wheels. She also helped school children practice their reading, both in English and Hebrew.

Chaya was a vibrant woman who never hesitated to ask a question or voice an unconventional opinion. She would often challenge her grandchildren by demanding, “Where does it say that in the Torah?” Regarding women’s roles within the Orthodox community, she was ahead of her time. She was a regular participant in the first women’s Gemara shiur in Melbourne, and continued studying in Yerushalayim. Her classmates were university students of varied religious affiliations from overseas, and she eagerly joined them in studying Rambam, Midrash, contemporary halakhah, and Hasidut. She was a prized “havruta,” and they cherished the opportunity to hear her comments, insights, and life experiences. Following the example of her grandson who taught the class, her classmates affectionately called her “Grandma.”

Big Grandma deeply believed in the vision of Nishmat’s Yoatzot Halacha and later the Yoatzot Halacha Fertility Counselors Project. Two of her granddaughters are Yoatzot Halacha and she often enquired with interest about their work helping women and couples face modern halakhic and medical challenges.

Chaya passed away on the 20th of Tevet 5781 at the age of 89, leaving two children and their families, including 89 great-grandchildren, who remember her with love and admiration.
Dedicated in honor of my mother

Bella Suchman

and in honor of my daughter and daughters-in-law,

Naomi, Gila, Emily, and Adinah

For the advancement of Nishmat’s mission,
to give Jewish women a voice in halakhic discourse,
so that my daughters, and their daughters,
and all of our daughters
may live in a world where women’s voices are heard,
their scholarship valued,
and their robust contributions to Jewish life recognized.

Rose Gerszberg
With profound gratitude
to the three most important women in my life:

To my mother

Shoshana Lunzer, a”h

who instilled within me my moral compass.

To my Ezer Kenegdo

Lauren

who has been my rock since the day we met,
and who continues to model for me
what a life’s partner is meant to be.

To my daughter

Shoshana Elizabeth

who continues to challenge my prenotions
and in so doing, expands my appreciation
of equality, justice, and inclusiveness.

David Lunzer
Rabbi Menachem Genack  
129 Meadowbrook Road  
Englewood, NJ 07631

May 24, 2021  
13 Sivan 5781

I was delighted to receive from Nishmat in Jerusalem a draft of the forthcoming English edition of their outstanding book, *Nishmat Habayit*. This collaborative work consists of numerous *teshuvot* on subjects related to pregnancy, birth, pregnancy loss, nursing and contraception written by *yoatzot halacha* and reviewed by Rabbi Yehuda Henkin zt”l and Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig. In addition, the sefer contains five medical appendices by Dr. Deena Zimmerman, herself a *yoetzet halacha* as well as a medical doctor.

Each *teshuvah* presents a summary of the practical *pesak halachah* followed by a more detailed look at the classical and contemporary halachic sources on which the *pesak* is based. The *teshuvot* are admirably clear and erudite, and the work as a whole provides an excellent guide to these complex halachot.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Rabbanit Henkin not only for her work on this excellent book, but for her vision in founding the program of *yoatzot halacha*. There is no doubt that women are more comfortable asking questions of other women in this sensitive realm. Speaking from my experience as a rabbi in Englewood, New Jersey, I think I can safely say that the *yoatzot halacha* who have served in our community and consulted with me on occasion, have received more questions in their relatively few years here than I have received over a period of many more years.

The phenomenon of bringing questions to women in these areas is not a new one. Rabbi Rabinovich, in his *haskamah* to the Hebrew edition of *Nishmat Habayit*, points to a Talmudic precedent for women advising other women on these matters. In Brisk, the women would bring questions to the wife of the Brisker Dayan, Rav Simcha Zelig, who would bring them to her husband. This system functioned well until Rav Chaim Soloveitchik was asked to be more active in *pesak* for the community. Rav Chaim agreed to answer questions in the area of *taharat hamishpacha* so the women began bringing their questions to Rav Chaim’s wife, who brought them to him. However, Rav Chaim had follow-up questions for each case and wanted to speak to the women directly. Since the women did not want to speak directly to Rav Chaim, the old system of bringing the questions to the Dayan’s wife was quickly restored. *Yoatzot* trained in these *halachot* make the process of asking questions and receiving responses a smoother one.

In sum, this *sefer* is an important addition to the halachic literature on these subjects and represents the welcome development of a cadre of women who are equipped to provide guidance in the realm of family purity.

[Signature]

Rabbi Menachem Genack
For some ten years now, I have had the privilege of working with the U.S. Yoatzot Halacha Fellows Program of Nishmat’s Miriam Glaubach Center, training Yoatzot Halacha. I continue to be in awe of the work and accomplishments of these Yoatzot. I am inspired by the intellectual rigor of the women in the program, and the dedicated work of the Yoatzot in the field. The women they have helped and the families they have benefitted, number well in the thousands.

A few years ago, the combination of Torah scholarship and dedication to assisting women and their families personified by the Yoatzot was made visible to a broader public by the publication of the much-heralded sefer, Nishmat Habayit. In its pages one can see Torah Chessed, the Torah of kindness and compassion, at work. Thoroughly researched comprehensive analysis of complicated topics is coupled with deep sensitivity to provide hora’ah, instruction, that is both halachically accurate, and of great help to women and their families.

With the publication of the English version, this treasure trove of psak halacha, insight, and compassion will now be available to the English-speaking public. This past year has unfortunately seen the passing, among other Gedolei Yisrael, of Nishmat’s founding Posek, Rav Yehuda Henkin ז’”ל. It was Rav Henkin’s uncompromisingly high standard of Torah scholarship together with his keen awareness of the challenges of the modern world that is consistently reflected in this work, and it is certainly a merit for his pure soul.

And we acknowledge the role of the Rebbe and Posek of the Yoatzot, Rav Yaakov Varhaftig, whose teachings permeate this work. And lastly, the true nefesh and neshama of Nishmat, Rabbanit Channa Henkin, who has the capacity to dream dreams and turn them into reality, was the moving force behind this publication. May they as well as all who participated in the various aspects of this sefer merit the blessings of the Noten Hatorah to be able to continue to serve Him with ever increasing contributions of Torah knowledge and Chessed.
 לישראל שאור ברוך פעמיים המברך
אלהר על כל מעשה tötorו,¥
אריה שטרן
ורב וראשיות לירושלים

מלכד מברך

זה כבר ב Mormon שטרד על שמי nahי על "דרישת שעתא" הפיתוח בך מחולמ של

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מבודמות תמייק בשכלי חשבה ביצת יברון קצץ חסן במרכס מפורשה וברודרה.

על הכל אולא יבודרי אימהו המרהשה שלוה טוה: הדר יחיה הקדש ששל"פ,א יבר היעקב

ארדפיג רשל"פ,א הרובין הרברת הקדוש חלד"פ,א והשאר עםידים מזוהרי כלי ממילות

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וח whiskey מראדא למל. העשוי יוס כייא סדר י"טישית בברית

ירטוי יזרדיו וירטיאיו והנויה הנויה שילשי, יוסריאיך,יוסרייך בכל יהלוי

סורת - קוסיא יזעעיל, ליזיו, הנקה, גמאיא וכותנה, בלוי סופר

רטסיוס, המשיכות ונה ל.protobuf והחברת התוכן שילסייס. לע כ"ע מוא של

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ומוצא בע PROFיסיס בכנבב משלוחק ומעטת המקהלים.

בנסף, עד הכריא יסיוס הסבריא על פי והמודר הרקייא המשכים

בירתם. ע"ד כ"ק, התוכן אה כ"ק זכר, זכר שילסייס חכים,

ככ ליזיו זכר, יוס זכריה משכנר התוכן שילסייס

הוחיים אלהיה.

ויי רזון שכר פעמים פנומד ליזיו והנויה הנויה שילסייס

וייזロー והנויה של התוכן היסריים מקהלה.
"ז Oilers משולש הקיצים של כל הנשק מבית אל עליי הערימה מליך מגדה.
ו המבילים רצון המקיף וכתוב בה" (משהי ה' דסיון ה' איי.)

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In previous generations, women’s lives were centered primarily around the home and child rearing. Women who were prominent in the public sphere, such as Devorah Ha-Nevi’ah were rare and exceptional. Indeed, the rishonim questioned how she could serve as a judge, and explained either that she had no official position or that it was a unique case.

However, even in the past, women were relied upon in some fields of halakhah, such as kashering meat and midwifery. Rambam wrote that if a woman is skilled, she may be trusted with shehita (ritual slaughter), and such is ikar hadin:

Whoever knows the laws of shehita, and slaughters in the presence of a hakham until he becomes adept, is considered an expert, mumheh. Any mumheh may slaughter l’khat hilah in private. Even women and slaves may initially slaughter, as long as they are mumhim (Laws of Shehita, 4:4).

A woman is certainly trusted with the laws of taharat ha-mishpaḥah, as the Torah states (Vayikra 15:28):

She shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall become tehorah.
In modern times, woman’s role in society has been fundamentally transformed. Today, women occupy prominent positions in all public spheres; in science, in medicine, in business and so on.

One of the greatest revolutions has occurred in the sphere of Torah learning. Women have progressed to the point of serious scholarship in all fields of Torah – Tanakh, Talmud and Halakhah.

Like in all other realms of halakhah, questions regarding taharat ha-mishpahah were in the past answered by rabbis. However, unlike other topics, discussing intimate and delicate matters with a man is often uncomfortable for the woman. Therefore, often the husband would be the one consulting with the expert rabbi.

The rabbi, with his learning and erudition, is able to render a halakhic ruling; but he is unable to feel all the woman feels. Often, her needs, sensitivities and personal experience of the laws of taharat ha-mishpahah, greatly influence the proper and correct ruling rendered.

Therefore, Rabbanit Chana Henkin, the dean of Nishmat – the Jeanie Schottenstein Center for Advanced Torah Study for Women, and her husband Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin z”l, Nishmat’s posek – together with me; reached the understanding that there was an urgent need to train women who would study in depth the laws of taharat ha-mishpahah with all their halakhic ramifications, from the source of the law to its application in practical life – well above and beyond the training which traditionally was given to madrikhot kallot (kallah teachers).

Our goal was not the training of poskot (halakhic decisors), and therefore we decided on the title Yoetzet Halacha – halakhic advisor. Our objective was for the Yoetzet to work in tandem with the local rabbi, in accordance with his rulings.

At the outset, we did not foresee how this initiative would take root and develop. Today, thank God, over a hundred and fifty women have completed our program worldwide, after being trained by us rabbis and by Rabbanit Noa Lau, the program coordinator. All have passed comprehensive oral examination by four expert rabbinic examiners, before receiving Yoetzet Halacha certification.

With God’s help we opened a branch in the United States, headed by Rabbi Aharon Naftali (Kenneth) Auman, the dean of Nishmat’s Miriam Glaubach Center. Four classes have already completed their studies, and now serve in more than thirty communities in North America and beyond.
To date, the Yoatzot have responded, by telephone or over the internet, to more than three hundred thousand questions from all around the world. In complex matters, they were guided by Rabbi Henkin zt”l and myself.

Thank God, we see how this program has blossomed and borne fruit, heightening awareness and enhancing observance and punctiliousness of the halakhot of taharat ha-mishpahah.

This first volume, Nishmat Ha-Bayit, presents a collection of some of the most common questions we have been asked. The responses were written by select Yoatzot who worked diligently to give a comprehensive but clear response, and were checked by Rabbi Henkin and by myself. I am confident that this book will join the ranks of authoritative books on the Laws of taharat ha-mishpahah, adding its unique contribution in fortifying taharat ha-bayit of the Jewish People, and kiddush shem Shamay’im, sanctifying God’s Name.

Yaakov Warhaftig
Dean, Nishmat’s Keren Ariel Yoatzot Halacha Institute
in memory of Emil (Ariel) Hess
Preface

The Torah directs a woman who has given birth to bring both an olah, burnt offering, and a hatat, sin offering, to the Mikdash. According to R. Yitzhak Abarbanel, the olah represents the mother’s gratitude for having merited to join together with Hashem in the creation of a new human life and for delivering it safely, as well as her joy at having safely undergone the pain and danger of childbirth. But what sin or fault of hers requires a hatat?

In her study sheets on Vayikra, Nechama Leibowitz wrote as follows:

The woman has merited to feel inside herself, in her very flesh, the greatness of the Creator. She saw, felt, lived the growing of life within her – and at the same time this led her to deeply feel her own smallness and insignificance; her being but ashes and dust, her own impurity. For this reason she is commanded to bring a Sin Offering.

In other words, paradoxically, the same uplifting experience which raises her to the greatest heights of human potential, serves at the same time as a reminder of her own insignificance. We have similar feelings upon the “birth” of our sefer. On the one hand, from the depths of our hearts, we can fulfill the joyous duty of expressing our gratitude: We were privileged to learn in Nishmat’s Keren Ariel program for training Yoatzot Halacha, to taste the sweetness of halakhic study, and thanks to our revered teachers – Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig and Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin zt”l – we have had the opportunity to delve deeply into Hilkhot Niddah. This halakhic training gave us the practical ability to help thousands of women, with their doubts and questions regarding taharat ha-mishpahah and women’s health. Following upon our initial training as
Yoatzot, as we researched the teshuvot contained in this book, we merited to continue to explore the topics from their primary sources as well as discussing them with our rabbis – shimush talmidei ḥakhamim.

Just as a woman who gave birth, brings her ḥatat as an expression of her sense of smallness – so too we found that as we immersed ourselves in the study of Torah, and encountered the vastness, the breadth, depth and complexity of halakhah, that we were continuously, and acutely, made aware of our own insignificance.

Our hearts abound with thanksgiving to all those who accompanied us in this great undertaking: to Rabbanit Chana Henkin, for editing the teshuvot meticulously and for her monumental efforts which sustain Nishmat and the Yoatzot Halacha undertaking. To our Teacher and Rabbi, Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig who guided us throughout our study and writing, being ever patient and welcoming – “Gadol hu shimusho af yoter mi-limudo,” the experience of apprenticing with him is even greater than that of learning from him. To Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin zt”l, who for years accompanied the Yoatzot Halacha and the authorship of the teshuvot, and who was always available to answer any question that arose. Rabbi Henkin is sorely missed, and the immense void he leaves in the Torah world is continuously felt by his students. May we merit spreading his teachings faithfully, so that many more women can continue benefiting from his wisdom and piskei halakhah. We are forever grateful to both rabbis for having enabled us to come close to true talmidei ḥakhamim.

The teshuvot in this volume were written by Yoatzot Halacha and reviewed by Rabbi Warhaftig – and then passed on to the editors, Rabbi and Rabbanit Henkin. Beyond their lucid style, which is clearly reflected throughout the book, the Rav and Rabbanit added linguistic precision, halakhic coherence, and a close and accurate reading of the words of the poskim. Further thanks are due to Rabbanit Noa Lau, who read through all the teshuvot, clarifying the phraseology and making important comments. Thanks to their efforts, we are confident that this book can achieve its goals, and that it will be accessible and clear to the reader.

We also would like to thank Yoetzet Halacha Rabbanit Dr. Deena Zimmerman, for clarifying the medical aspects of the different questions we were asked; as well as Rabbi David Sperling, with whom we frequently consulted with while studying in the Bet Midrash.

With deep, heartfelt sorrow, we remember and commemorate Rabbi Eitam Henkin Hy’d, who participated in editing some of the responses.
Preface

We thank Rabbi Elli Fischer for his assistance with the translation, and Yoetzet Halacha Rabbanit Ilana Elzufon for her invaluable glosses and input.

We consulted with medical specialists and other professionals in preparing the teshuva: Dr. Elhanan Baron and Yoatzot Halacha Drs. Eliraz Weinberg and Gila Gold read through the medical appendices and Dr. Avishai Malkiel, Michal Schonbrun and Einat Lev helped clarify various related issues. We owe a debt of gratitude to our colleagues, Yoatzot Halacha Rabbaniot Hindy Feder, Atara Eis, Shira Menitentag, Laurie Novick, Rotem Glasser, Dr. Tirza Kelman and Dr. Ayelet Kaminetzky for their assistance.

Our thanks also to Matthew Miller and the staff of Maggid Books, Reuven Ziegler, Caryn Meltz, and Ruth Pepperman, for their professional guidance.

We express a special sense of gratitude to our families, for their encouragement and support, enabling us to devote a great deal of time to Torah study, and to answering the many thousands of women whom we have had the privilege of helping, and strengthening their observance of the laws of taharat ha-mishpahah.

We thank Hashem for having merited participating in the Yoatzot Halacha initiatives, and having had the privilege of taking part in authorship of this book. In the name of my fellow Yoatzot Halacha, I conclude with the prayer that this sefer help raise the level of halakhic observance, and that, G-d forbid, no mishap be caused by it.

Michal Roness
Coordinator, Makhon L’Mehkar
Nishmat
Introduction

Nishmat’s *Keren Ariel* Program for training Yoatzot Halacha, in memory of Ariel Emil Hess zt”l, was born of my own experience as a Rabbi’s wife. When I was young, for a period of years, I devoted most of my energies outside our home to instructing women in *taharat ha-mishpahah*. Time and again I encountered women who would not ask a question of a rabbi. Some would act overly leniently, going beyond what is halakhically permitted, while others would be unnecessarily stringent, disrupting their family life. Additionally, I encountered numerous women suffering severe distress because of medical conditions which intersected with halakhic issues.

I approached my husband, Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin zt”l, and Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig who both concurred wholeheartedly with training God-fearing, learned women, to serve as a female halakhic address for women seeking guidance in *taharat ha-mishpahah*. To the in-depth study of *halakhah*, we added supplementary studies in women’s health on topics intersecting with the laws of *taharat ha-mishpahah*, in order to develop a comprehensive toolkit for practical assistance. The program opened in Elul 5757 (September 1997), and since then, over 150 Yoatzot Halacha have completed their studies. Most of them serve in Israel, and some 30 in conjunction with community rabbis outside Israel. Since the inception, Rabbi Warhaftig and Rabbi Henkin zt”l served as the address for Yoatzot for questions requiring *psikah*. We chose the name Yoatzot Halacha to convey a posture of humility before the world of *psikah*.

We did not anticipate the overwhelming response of women to the new resource. We have received hundreds of thousands of questions, from Israel and from throughout the Jewish world. The questions reached us via Nishmat’s Golda
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Koschitzky Hotline and Nishmat’s Yoatzot internet site, or were addressed directly to Yoatzot Halacha in their communities. Many of the questions had medical or emotional facets.

This book was born following seventeen years of Yoatzot Halacha work in the field. It is not intended to be a sefer pesak, but rather to foster awareness of the halakhic challenges experienced by observant women, and to organize the halakhah for the benefit of those who are learning, with the aim of strengthening proper observance of halakhah and alleviating the grief which clouds the lives of many couples. Out of the thousands of anonymous questions in our database, we collected for this volume questions dealing with pregnancy, childbirth, and contraception. Their unique value lies in their addressing issues which women are facing today.

This book has two parts: the teshuvot, and the medical appendices. In the brief answer, we summarize the response of the Yoetzet Halacha. In personal conversations, by phone, or even in written internet responses – Yoatzot respond empathetically, patiently explaining halakhic concepts and their application in detail, in accordance with the woman’s knowledge of halakhah and the extent of information she wishes to receive. Often, if need be, the Yoetzet will offer emotional support or personal guidance. We have followed the brief answer with an extensive halakhic analysis. In the second part of the book we have added clinical information which morei hora’ah may find beneficial.

The Yoatzot Halacha, and the thousands of women whom they assist, owe a debt of immense gratitude to Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin zt”l and Rabbi Yaakov Warhaftig, the two poskim who threw open the gates of halakhic learning before women. I wish to thank personally Rabbi Warhaftig and Rabbanit Noa Lau for their partnership in paving the path of the Yoatzot Halacha, and for their wise instruction; and Rabbanit Michal Roness who steered this book from vision to reality. This sefer would not be if not for her devotion and determination; and her wisdom and kindness turned every discussion to an edifying experience. I also wish to salute the Yoatzot Halacha who tirelessly strive, with fear of God and love of Man, to raise the standard of purity in Israel and make halakhic life pleasant for Jewish women. May God bless them all.

Work on these teshuvot began while my son and daughter-in-law, Rabbi Eitam and Naama Henkin, וּהַנֶּאֱהָבִים וְהַנְּעִימִם בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרָד, may God avenge their murder, were still with us. My husband zt”l was a posek whose influence ran far and wide, and our world would be a different place but for his profound support of women’s studying Torah. This volume is a reflection
both of his insistence that the methodology of *halakhah* is timeless, and of his refusal to lower the bar for women. His passing has left our family bereft, and the Jewish world with a void that will not easily be filled. May the enhancement of Torah and *taharah* by this book offer some consolation to a grieving wife and mother, as it is written (Tehillim 94:19): “*Tanĥumekha yesha‘ashe‘u nafshi*.”

Signed with a prayer for God’s blessing upon all households of Israel,
Chana Henkin
Jerusalem, Tammuz 5782
Part I

Pregnancy
Siman 1

Panty Liners during the Seven Neki’im When Trying to Conceive

Question
I am 36 years old and trying to conceive. Each month, several days into the seven neki’im, red ketamim (stains), larger than the size of a gris, appear on the white panty liner I use, forcing me to start counting from the beginning. I cannot manage to become tehorah before ovulation, and my period (which is otherwise regular) begins just a few days after immersing. Is there any way to resolve this problem?

Answer
Lekhatĥilah, a woman is expected to wear white underwear during the seven neki’im. If she sees a red ketem that is larger than the size of a gris on the underwear, she must start the count over. Many women regularly wear panty liners throughout the month, to absorb natural discharges, and most poskim permit this practice even during the seven neki’im.

According to many opinions, a panty liner is not susceptible to tum’ah. Therefore, unless a woman had a hargashah (sensation) that would render her niddah, even a large red ketem found on the liner would not bring about niddah status. However, if such a ketem is found on the panty liner during the seven neki’im, the woman must perform a bedikah (internal self-examination) immediately, and her status is determined by what appears on the bedikah cloth, regardless of its size.
This rule applies under normal circumstances. However, in the case of a woman who suffers from ketamim and has a hard time becoming tehorah, a different rule applies. Under such circumstances, the woman may use a panty liner, either white or dark, during the seven neki'im and not examine herself immediately even if she saw a ketem. Additionally, she may skip the bedikot on days that she sees ketamim. However, she may not omit the bedikot on the first and seventh day of the neki'im.

Based on your description, in your specific situation, you may conduct yourself as a woman who suffers from ketamim and ignore the stains that you see on the panty liner. Nevertheless, you must perform a hefsek taharah, one bedikah on the first of the neki'im, and one on the seventh. If they are blood-free, you may immerse.

**Halakhic Expansion**

The Gemara (Shabbat 13b) distinguishes between “days of menstruation” (yemei niddut) and “days of whiteness” (yemei libun). Rashi (ad loc.) explains that “days of whiteness” are the seven neki'im, during which “[a woman] must wear white clothing, for examination.” It seems that the core meaning of “whiteness” and “white clothing” is laundered and clean; accordingly, Tur and Shulḥan Arukh rule that during the seven neki'im, a woman must wear a clean undergarment that has been checked for stains. However, several Rishonim write that a woman must wear white undergarments and use white bedsheets during the seven neki'im.

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1. There are many different possible reasons for irregular menstrual bleeding. It is recommended that a woman who suffers from repeated staining consult her gynecologist to ascertain the cause of the bleeding and the best solution. See Medical Appendix I: The Female Reproductive System, and Medical Appendix V: Contraception.
2. See also below, Siman 14: Mokh Daĥuk and Bedikot following Birth.
3. Tur and Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De’ah 196:3. This is also the ruling of Arukh Ha-Shulḥan, Yoreh De’ah, 196:22.
4. Roke‘ah, Hilkhot Niddah siman 317: “She wears clothes, a white robe and a white sheet on her bed; this is ‘days of whiteness.’” The formulation of Roke‘ah is cited in Mordekhai as well, and Rema rules accordingly in Yoreh De’ah 196:3.
5. There is room to comment that since nowadays women sleep in form-fitting undergarments it is not necessary to be meticulous about this. R. Warhaftig and R. Henkin rule that there is no need for white sheets, even lekhathilah. In contrast, R. Shlomo Levi writes that there is room to be lenient only in times of need (Sha’arei Orah, p. 142). See Taharat Ke-Halakhah, p 296, n. 78, which rules stringently on this matter based on Shi‘arei Shevet Ha-Levi (196:3:3, p. 281) and Igrot Moshe (Yoreh De‘ah 4:17, part 27). R. Moshe Feinstein is concerned that women will not distinguish between form-fitting and loose undergarments. R. Wosner notes that technically there is no need for a white sheet, but nevertheless rules that one should be meticulous about this lekhathilah, as it is a “proper Jewish custom.” However, bedi‘avad or in extenuating circumstances, it is not compulsory. R. Ovadiah Yosef (Taharat Ha-Bayit, 2:13:4,
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Torat Ha-Shelamim\(^6\) cites two reasons for the need to wear white. First, it is important for the garment to be clean, in order to be certain that there are no prior stains from the days of menstruation, which would produce uncertainty about the woman’s present status. Second, it is important that the garment not be colored, so as to establish with certainty that the woman is currently without stains, during the seven neki’im. It is only according to the second reason that it is necessary for the garment to be truly white. Nevertheless, all poskim agree that under extenuating circumstances, or bedi’avad,\(^7\) the seven neki’im are valid even without wearing white.

In recent years, it has become common for women to wear a panty liner regularly, throughout the month, to absorb bodily discharges. This practice raises the question of whether one may wear a panty liner during the seven neki’im. On one hand, according to many opinions, the liner is not susceptible to tum’ah,\(^8\) but on the other hand, it is white, and stains are visible on it. Additionally, wearing a panty liner does not fit with the aforementioned custom of wearing white garments.\(^9\)

Most contemporary poskim\(^10\) permit wearing a panty liner during the seven neki’im. This raises the question of how to relate to finding a ketem, unaccompanied by a hargashah, on a liner during the seven neki’im. According to most opinions, a ketem found on a panty liner at a time when the woman is tehorah

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7. For example, if the woman is traveling and does not have a change of clothes. This is the ruling of Rema, based on Agur (siman 1371) and Hagahot Sha’arei Dura.
8. See below, Siman 44: Staining on a Panty Liner or Synthetic Clothing, in Halakhic Expansion.
9. If it is white, because of the material from which it is manufactured, which is not cloth; if it is colored, because it is not white.
10. Since this is a recent phenomenon, only contemporary poskim address it, and this is the ruling of R. Warhaftig and R. Henkin. R. Wosner (Shi’arei Shevet Ha-Levi 196:3:1, p. 281) writes: “During the seven neki’im, she may go with a pad made to absorb sweat, and there is no need to be concerned that a drop of blood will be absorbed in it.” R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes as follows in response to a question from R. David Dudkevitz as to whether it is permissible to wear a panty liner during the seven neki’im: “During the seven neki’im they are certainly good, as they are white. However, white sheets are also necessary in case they move around, and with respect to colored ones, we said that they are not susceptible to tum’ah” (R. Auerbach’s responsum is cited in R. Shlomo Levi’s article in Tzohar, issue 20 [5765], pp. 21–23). On the basis of this responsum, R. Elyashiv Knohl (Ish Ve-Isha, p. 101 and p. 144, n. 21) writes that even a woman who has no particular problems may wear a panty liner during the seven neki’im, as long as the liner is of the sort that a bloodstain would be visible on it. R. Zechariah Ben-Shlomo (Orot Ha-Taharah, pp. 278–79) writes that one may use a panty liner during the seven neki’im lekhathilah, and they are even preferable to white underwear, since they remain white and do not darken over time.
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does not render her niddah, since the liner is made from materials that are not susceptible to tum'ah. The same applies during the seven neki’im, except that during the neki’im, a woman must wear white to ascertain that she has indeed stopped bleeding. Therefore, if she found a red ketem larger than ke-gris (the size of a gris) on a panty liner during the seven neki’im, even though the ketem does not render her niddah, she must perform a bedikah immediately to ensure that she maintains her halakhic presumption of cleanness.  

Nevertheless, Ḥakhamim were lenient in the case of a woman who has a difficult time becoming tehorah and who suffers from ketamim, permitting her to wear colored garments to save her from ketamim. Aḥaronim note that this leniency

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11. This is the ruling of R. Warhaftig and R. Henkin. This ruling is a compromise between the view that a stain on a panty liner during the seven neki’im is akin to a stain on white underwear, and the view that is lenient regarding panty liners during the seven neki’im as when the woman is tehorah. R. Aharon Naftali (Kenneth) Auman, Dean of Nishmat’s Miriam Glaubach Center, does not require a bedikah under these circumstances.

In contrast, according to R. Shlomo Levi, a red stain larger than a gris on a panty liner always renders the woman teme’ah, and there is no need for a bedikah. This is in light of his stringent ruling vis-à-vis panty liners, as they are manufactured as a kli and are form-fitting (Sha’arei Or, pp. 89–90). R. Levi disagrees with R. Knoh’s understanding of R. Auerbach’s responsum, as cited in the previous footnote. According to R. Levi (Tzohar, issue 20, pp. 21-23), R. Auerbach indeed permitted wearing a panty liner over white underwear during the seven neki’im, but if a stain is found on it, it renders her teme’ah. This is the meaning of his distinction between white underwear and colored underwear, over the latter of which one should not wear a panty liner during the seven neki’im.

R. Levi’s interpretation of R. Auerbach’s words is difficult, in my opinion, and this requires further study. R. Zechariah Ben-Shlomo cites another view. He recommends wearing a panty liner during the seven neki’im, adding: “It has already been clarified above that a stain found on a disposable hygienic item is tahor, as it is considered something that is not susceptible to tumah” (Orot Ha-Taharah, pp. 278–79).

12. It is not always simple to define who is a “woman who has a hard time becoming tehorah.” A posek must take into account medical, psychological, and marital information about the woman and her husband, together with halakhic information, and decide when she can be so defined, thus warranting leniency. Simpler situations include, for example, a woman who has not managed to become tehorah more than six weeks after childbirth or a woman whose count of seven neki’im is negated by ketamim that render her teme’ah or by bedikot that do not emerge clean.


14. R. Wosner (Shi’urei Shevet Ha-Levi 190:19, p. 171) permits this only in the case of a woman who is unable to become tehorah, only during the middle days of the seven neki’im and after asking a halakhic question, and only as a temporary measure (hora’at sha’ah). R. Mordechai Eliyahu (Darkhei Taharah, p. 22), cites all the views and rules that a woman with many ketamim should ask a halakhic question as to what to do, and to be lenient with regard to colored garments. This is also the ruling of R. Yekutiel Farkash (Taharah Ke-Halakhah, p. 297). R. Ovadiah Yosef (Taharat Ha-Bayit, 2:13:4, pp. 293–96) addresses this topic. He writes that according to the
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applies during the seven neki’im as well. Contemporary poskim write that instead of wearing colored garments, it is possible, and perhaps preferable, to use a panty liner, which is not susceptible to tum’ah. In such a situation, the woman need not perform a bedikah immediately upon seeing a ketem on the liner; on the contrary, she relies on the laws of ketamim and performs only the essential bedikot, on the first and seventh days, so that she can become tehorah.

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aforementioned ruling of Shulḥan Arukh that clean, bloodstain-free garments are sufficient, it is obvious that colored garments may be worn even during the seven neki’im. He cites a list of poskim who are stringent and require specifically white garments during the seven neki’im, even when the woman suffers from ketamim, but disagrees with them, claiming that from the moment the woman performed a hefsek taharah, she is defined as having a presumption of taharah (heckat taharah), and therefore no distinction should be made between the seven neki’im and when she is tehorah. He also addresses the view among poskim that colored garments may not be worn specifically during the first three of the seven neki’im; R. Ovadia rejects this view, too (relying on the responsa Me’il Tzedakah siman 62 and Berit Yo’aakov, Yoreh De’ah siman 58), and ultimately permits wearing colored garments even lekhatĥilah for a woman who is likely to find ketamim. It should be noted that R. Shlomo Levi (Sha’arei Orah, p. 142) rules stringently on this matter, writing that only a woman with a petza (sore, cut, or abrasion) may temporarily wear a colored garment during the seven neki’im. However, a woman who suffers from ketamim (such as a nursing mother or a woman taking pills) should not wear a colored garment.

15. R. Yekutiel Farkash (Tarahah Ke-Halakhah, p. 80) writes that, if possible, in such situations, wearing a pad that is not susceptible to tum’ah may be preferable to a colored garment, and “this is more mehudar.” On p. 80, n. 15*, he writes: “However, with regard to the seven neki’im, I have found nobody who discusses [a woman wearing a pad if ketamim make it difficult for her to become tehorah]. At first glance, it would seem to be clearly permitted – for nowhere do we find that she is specifically obligated to wear a garment that is susceptible to tum’ah during the seven neki’im. They insisted only that the garment be white, clean, and checked for stains, etc. On the other hand, according to this, all ketamim found during the seven neki’im would be deemed tahor. I asked many of the greatest poskim and my teachers, under whom I apprenticed, and no one told me anything clear on this matter – even though, at first glance, it seems quite correct to all of them.” As stated, R. Knohl (Ish Ve-Isha, p. 101) permits wearing a panty liner even lekhatĥilah during the seven neki’im, noting that, “These liners can assist the posek in cases of uncertainty.…” R. Shlomo Levi (Sha’arei Orah, p. 89) rules stringently about a ketem on a panty liner, but if there is another reason to be lenient, for example, if the woman has an IUD and finds stains on the liner, he rules leniently and deems her tehorah, even during the seven neki’im, based also on the possibility that it may perhaps be blood from a petza (sore, cut, or abrasion) (Tzohar, issue 29, p. 23). R. Zechariah Ben-Shlomo (Orot Ha-Tarahah, p. 312) writes that a ketem found during the seven neki’im on something not susceptible to tum’ah does not cause tum’ah, because Hakhamim made no decree about this. Therefore, it is permissible and worthwhile to place a panty liner lekhatĥilah to absorb the ketamim. According to him: “The seven neki’im must be clean of tamei blood that causes tum’ah, but it is not necessary for them to be free of blood that halakhah deems tahor, not because of its appearance, but because of the rules of ketamim.”