

בית הוראה דיעטראיט  
**BAIS HORAAH OF DETROIT**  
HALACHA HOTLINE

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF HaRav Shmuel Irons שליט"א VAAD HALACHA Rav Aharon Yoel Sorscher • Rav Yissachar Wolf • Rav Boruch Miller

KITCHEN • SHABBOS • YOM TOV • BRACHOS • AVEILUS • TAHARAS HAMISHPACHA • EVERYDAY SHAILOS

## ISSUE #31 – Refuah on Shabbos FAQs

### Commonly Received Questions and their Answers

Below are some common questions and answers based on psakim from the rabbonim of the Bais Horaah. Please note: in the event one believes they have heard a different opinion in the past, one's family posek should always be consulted. Mareh mekomos for any specific answers below are available by email request to [ask@bhdetroit.org](mailto:ask@bhdetroit.org).

- **May medications be taken on Shabbos?**
  - Any medication or treatment being taken for a **potentially life-threatening condition** must be taken on Shabbos. The questions below relate to situations of **less serious conditions**.
  - Children under the age of bar or bas mitzvah may take any necessary medication on Shabbos.
- **May one take pain relief medication on Shabbos or Yom Tov?**
  - If the pain is severe enough to require bed rest or **significantly** disrupt one's daily function, a pain reliever may be taken.
  - If pain of this severity is anticipated (e.g. a migraine headache), a pain reliever may be taken in **advance**.
- **Are antibiotics permitted to be taken on Shabbos?**
  - Antibiotics may be taken on Shabbos, as **infections** can become dangerous if left untreated, even in an otherwise healthy person.
- **May a person take vitamins on Shabbos?**
  - Vitamins taken daily by a **healthy person** for general health maintenance may be taken on Shabbos.
  - Vitamins taken to treat a medical **deficiency** should be discussed with a Halachic Authority.
- **May a pregnant woman take prenatal vitamins or iron supplements?**
  - Yes, as prescribed by her doctor.
- **What about behavioral or mental health medication?**
  - Mental health medications **may** be taken on Shabbos, even for **minor conditions**.
- **Are cold or allergy medication permitted to be taken on Shabbos?**
  - These are generally not permitted, unless the symptoms are severe enough to **significantly disrupt** one's daily function.
  - If one needs to take a **daily** allergy medication, a Halachic Authority should be consulted.
- **Can one take acne medication on Shabbos?**
  - It is not permitted to take **pills** to treat acne on Shabbos unless there is a **risk of infection** or significant social impairment. In other cases of need a Halachic Authority must be consulted.
  - Acne **creams** carry additional concerns of smearing which is prohibited on Shabbos.
- **May cough drops be taken on Shabbos?**
  - **Medicated** cough drops, which are typically used only for illness, should not be taken on Shabbos. However, non-medicated **candies** or **lozenges** commonly used by **healthy** individuals may be taken to relieve symptoms.
- **May one take a laxative supplement such as Metamucil on Shabbos?**
  - If it is taken **daily** for general health maintenance, and was mixed into juice or a similar beverage **before** Shabbos it may be taken.
- **May Lactaid be taken on Shabbos?**
  - Lactaid and similar dairy **enzyme** pills may be taken before eating dairy.
- **May Tums be taken on Shabbos?**
  - Tums may be taken for **severe heartburn** and may also be taken in advance if such symptoms are **expected**.
- **May a dental retainer or palate expander be worn on Shabbos?**
  - Yes, however a palate expander should not be adjusted if doing so will cause **pain**.
- **May orthodontic rubber bands or wax be used on Shabbos?**
  - Rubber bands may be inserted and removed as necessary. Wax cannot be **smoothed** or **molded** into place.
- **Do the laws of refuah on Yom Tov follow the same rules as Shabbos?**
  - In general, the laws of refuah on Yom Tov follow the same rules as on Shabbos. However, when Yom Tov **Sheini** falls on a **weekday**, refuah is permitted as long as no additional melacha is involved. **Rosh Hashanah** is an exception where both days follow the same stricter rules as Shabbos.

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- **If a non-Jewish pharmacy delivers medication on Shabbos, may it be used?**
  - Yes, provided the medication is for a treatment that is otherwise permitted.
- **May one use ice for a wound on Shabbos?**
  - Yes, ice may be used for a wound on Shabbos.
- **May one use a hot water bottle for a minor ache on Shabbos?**
  - In general, minor aches may not be treated on Shabbos due to the rabbinic prohibition of refuah. However, a **sealed** hot water bottle may be used when it **does not appear** to be for medical purposes such as for warmth in cold weather.
  - To fill the bottle, it should first be **emptied** as much as possible (a few remaining drops are not a concern) and then filled from the urn.
- **May one use a chemical-based instant heat or ice pack on Shabbos?**
  - These may not be **activated** on Shabbos. If they were activated **before** Shabbos, they follow the same halachos as regular heat or ice packs.
- **May one use hand lotion or oil on Shabbos?**
  - Lotion or oil may be used if it meets the following conditions:
    1. It is a **thin**, pourable type.
    2. The person applies it **regularly** throughout the week, even when the hands are not chapped.
    3. **Currently** they are not chapped.
- **Is it permitted to check a person's temperature on Shabbos?**
  - A non-electric thermometer may be used when needed, such as to determine if someone has a fever. Thermometers in which numbers appear through a color change may not be used unless the numbers are mostly visible **before use**.
- **May one perform a strep test on Shabbos?**
  - There is room to be lenient and use a strep test on Shabbos when **necessary**.
- **May an ace bandage be used on Shabbos?**
  - Yes, an elastic wrap ace bandage may be used, provided a **double knot** is not tied.
- **Are stretches or therapeutic exercises permitted on Shabbos?**
  - These may be done **privately**, without **equipment**, and only if not intended to cause **sweating**.
- **May one take caffeine pills or melatonin on Shabbos?**
  - Yes. Please note: Chewable melatonin and chewable vitamins must have a reliable **kosher** certification for year-round use, and a special kosher certification for **Pesach**.
  - For information on acceptable products you may contact the Halacha Hotline via text message to 248-923-1613 or email ask@bhdetroit.org.
- **May contact lenses be inserted into solution?**
  - Yes, unless they are so dried out that their shape is **distorted**.
- **May a Band-Aid be applied on Shabbos?**
  - Yes, but it should be wrapped in a **spiral** so the adhesive sticks directly to the skin and not onto **itself**. The protective wrapper and backing **may** be removed in the normal manner using the tabbed openings.
  - Cream or ointment to prevent infection may be dabbed onto the skin using a **spoon** or other utensil. The Band-Aid may then be applied allowing the cream to spread **naturally** beneath it.
- **Can a partially detached piece of nail or skin be removed on Shabbos?**
  - A hanging piece of **skin** may not be removed.
  - A mostly detached piece of **nail** causing significant discomfort may be removed without using scissors or nail clippers.

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