70438 - Dos and Don'ts during Menstruation

the question

What are the rulings on menses for women?

Summary of answer

A menstruating woman is not allowed to:
1. pray both obligatory and nawafil prayers;
2. fast whether it is an obligatory or a nafl fast;
3. circumambulate the Ka’bah. For more, please see the detailed answer.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There are many rulings pertaining to menstruation, more than twenty, of which we will mention those which we think are most essential. They are:

Can menstruating women pray?

It is haram for a menstruating woman to pray both obligatory and nawafil prayers, and they are not valid if she does them. She does not have to do a particular prayer unless she was pure or became pure with enough time to perform a complete rak’ah, in which case she has to do the prayer, whether it is at the beginning of the time for it or at the end.

An example of that happening at the beginning of the time for prayer is a woman who got her menses after the sun set but she had enough time to perform a complete rak’ah (but she did not do it), so when she becomes pure she has to make up that Maghrib prayer, because she had enough time to perform a complete rak’ah before she got her menses.

An example of that happening at the end of the time for prayer is a woman whose menses ended before the sun rose and there was enough time left to perform a complete rak'ah. When she becomes pure she has to make up that Fajr prayer, because she had enough time to perform one rak'ah.

But if there is not enough time to perform a rak'ah, such as in the first scenario, if a woman gets her menses a moment after the sun sets or, in the second scenario, she becomes pure a moment before the sun rises, then she does not have to do that prayer, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever catches up with a rak'ah of prayer has caught up with the prayer." Agreed upon.

Can menstruating women make dhikr?

With regard to dhikr, takbir, saying Subhan-Allah, praising Allah, saying Bismillah when eating and so on, and reading hadith, fiqh and du'as, or saying Amin to du'as, and listening to Quran, none of these things are forbidden to her. It is proven in al-Sahihayn and elsewhere that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to recline in 'Aishah's lap (may Allah be pleased with her) when she was menstruating, and he would recite Quran.

In al-Sahihayn, it is also narrated from Umm 'Atiyyah that she heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: "Let the girls who have attained puberty, women in seclusion and menstruating women go out – i.e., to the 'Eid prayer – and witness good and the gathering of the believers. But let the menstruating women avoid the prayer place."

Can menstruating women read the Quran?

With regard to the menstruating woman reading Quran , if she is looking at it or thinking of it in her heart, without speaking the words out loud, there is nothing wrong with that, such as if the Mus-haf is placed there, and she looks at the verses and reads them in her heart. Al-Nawawi said in Sharh Muslim: it is permissible and there is no difference of scholarly opinion on this point.

But if she is reciting it out loud, the majority of scholars are of the view that this is not allowed.

Al-Bukhari, Ibn Jarir, al-Tabari and Ibn al-Mundhir said it is permissible, and this was also narrated from Malik and from al-Shafi'i in his former view. That was narrated from them in Fath al-Bari. And al-Bukhari narrated in a mu'allaq report from Ibrahim al-Nakha'i that there is nothing wrong with her reciting a verse.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said in al-Fatawa:

"There is no report saying that she should not read Quran. The hadith "No menstruating woman or person who is junub should recite anything from the Quran" is a weak hadith, according to the consensus of the scholars who are well-versed in hadith. Women used to menstruate at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and if reading was haram for them as prayer is, this would have been something that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained to his ummah and the Mothers of the Believers would have known that, and it would have been something that they told to the people. But since no one narrated any prohibition concerning that from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), it is not permissible to regard it as haram, since it is known that he did not forbid that, and as he did not forbid that despite the fact that menstruation was widespread at his time, it is known that it is not haram."

Since we know that there is a difference of opinion among the scholars concerning this, what should be said is: it is better for a menstruating woman not to recite Quran out loud except when there is need for that, such as if she is a teacher and she needs to teach her students, or in the case of an exam when the student needs to recite in order to be tested, and so on.

Can a menstruating woman fast?

It is haram for a menstruating woman to fast , whether it is an obligatory or a nafl fast, and it is not valid if she does it. But she has to make up any obligatory fasts that she misses, because of the hadith of 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: "That – meaning menses – used to happen to us and we were commanded to make up fasts but we were not commanded to make up prayers." (Agreed upon)

If a woman gets her menses when she is fasting , her fast becomes invalid even if that happens

just before Maghrib, and she has to make up that day if it was an obligatory fast.

But if she feels that the period was coming before Maghrib, but no blood came out until after the sun set, then her fast is complete and is not invalidated, according to the correct view. This is because there is no ruling connected to blood that is still inside the body. When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked about a woman who sees in a dream what a man sees (i.e., an erotic dream), does she have to do ghusl? He said: “Yes, if she sees water.”

So the ruling is connected to seeing water, not feeling body sensations. The same applies to menses: the rulings do not apply until it is seen outside the body, not just the body sensations.

If dawn comes when the woman is menstruating, it is not valid for her to fast that day even if she becomes pure even a moment after dawn.

When to resume fasting after menses

If a woman becomes pure just before dawn and fasts , her fast is valid even if she does not do ghusl until after dawn. This is like the one who is junub – if he intends to fast when he is junub and does not do ghusl until after dawn breaks, his fast is valid, because of the hadith of ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to wake up junub as the result of intercourse, not a wet dream, and he would fast in Ramadan. Agreed upon.

Can menstruating women make Tawaf around the Ka’bah?

It is haram for a menstruating woman to circumambulate the Ka’bah, whether that is obligatory or nafl, and it is not valid if she does it. This is because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to ‘Aishah when she got her menses: “Do everything that the pilgrims do, but do not circumambulate the House until you become pure.”

Can menstruating women perform other rituals of Hajj?

As for the other actions of Hajj, such as sa'i between al-Safa and al-Marwah, standing at 'Arafah, staying overnight in Muzdalifah and Mina, stoning the jamarat and other rituals of Hajj and 'Umrah, they are not haram for her. Based on that, if a female does tawaf when she is pure, then her period begins immediately after she does tawaf, or during sa'i, there is nothing wrong with that.

Can menstruating women perform Tawaf al-wada' (the farewell tawaf)?

If a female completes the rituals of Hajj and 'Umrah, then she gets her menses before she goes home and that continues until she leaves, she may depart without doing the farewell tawaf , because of the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: (the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)) told the people that the last thing they should do was (tawaf) around the House, but he made an exception for women who were menstruating . Agreed upon.

But the tawaf that is required for Hajj and 'Umrah is not waived, and she must do it when she becomes pure.

Can menstruating women stay in the mosque?

It is haram for the menstruating woman to stay in the mosque and even in the 'Eid prayer-place, because of the hadith of Umm 'Atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her), who said that she heard the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: "Let the girls who have attained puberty, women in seclusion and menstruating women go out – i.e., to the 'Eid prayer." In this hadith it says: "But let the menstruating women avoid the prayer place." Agreed upon.

Can a husband have intercourse with his menstruating wife?

It is haram for her husband to have intercourse with his menstruating wife, and it is haram for her to allow him to do so, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: that is an adha (a harmful thing for a husband to

have sexual intercourse with his wife while she is having her menses), therefore, keep away from women during menses and go not unto them till they are purified (from menses and have taken a bath).” [al-Baqarah 2:222]

What is meant by maheed (translated here as menstruation) is the time of menses, and the location of this menses is the private part.

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Do everything except have intercourse.” (Narrated by Muslim)

And the Muslims are unanimously agreed that it is haram to have intercourse with a menstruating woman in her vagina.

Can a husband kiss and touch his menstruating wife?

But it is permissible for him to do that which will satisfy his desire without having intercourse, such as kissing, touching and intimacy that is less than intercourse, but it is better not to be intimate with that which is between the navel and the knee except through a barrier, because ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to tell me to wear a waist wrapper, then he would be intimate with me when I was menstruating. Agreed upon.

Divorce during menses

It is haram for a husband to divorce a menstruating woman during her menses , because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)! When you divorce women, divorce them at their ‘Iddah (prescribed periods).” [al-Talaq 65:1]

And that can only be if they are divorced when they are pregnant or pure without having had intercourse since the menses ended. Because if a woman is divorced when she is menstruating she cannot start her ‘iddah, because the menstrual period during which she was divorced cannot

be counted as part of the ‘iddah; and if she is divorced when she is pure but has had intercourse since her period ended, she cannot start her ‘iddah, because it cannot be known whether she became pregnant from this intercourse. So it should be reckoned by her pregnancy, or if she is not pregnant it should be reckoned by her menstrual cycle. If it cannot be ascertained what sort of 'iddah it is, it is haram for him to divorce her until things become clear.

Divorcing a menstruating woman at the time of her menses is haram because of the verse quoted above, and because of the report in al-Sahihayn and elsewhere from Ibn ‘Umar who said that he divorced his wife when she was menstruating. ‘Umar told the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about that, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) got angry and said: “Tell him to take her back and keep her until she becomes pure, then menstruates, then becomes pure again. Then if he wishes he may keep her after that, or if he wishes he may divorce her before he touches (has intercourse with) her. That is the prescribed period within which Allah has enjoined divorce of women.”

If a man divorces his wife when she is menstruating, he is sinning and he has to repent to Allah and take the woman back in order to divorce her in the prescribed manner as enjoined by Allah and His Messenger. Then he should leave her alone after he takes her back until she becomes pure from the menses during which he divorced her, then menstruates again, then when she becomes pure again, if he wishes he may keep her or if he wishes he may divorce her before having intercourse with her.

Exceptions from the prohibition on divorcing a woman during her menses

There are three cases where an exception is made from the prohibition on divorcing a woman during her menses:

1. If the divorce occurs before he spent time alone with her or touched her. There is nothing wrong with him divorcing her when she is menstruating, because in that case she does not have to observe any ‘iddah, so this divorce does not go against the words of Allah, “divorce them at their ‘Iddah (prescribed periods)”.

2. If the menses occurs during pregnancy.

3. If the divorce takes place in return for some compensation, in which case there is nothing wrong with divorcing her when she is menstruating.

Can a woman get married during her menses?

There is nothing wrong with doing a marriage contract with a woman who is menstruating, because the basic principle is that it is permissible, and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. But the idea of the husband entering upon her when she is menstruating is subject to further discussion. If he can be trusted not to have intercourse with her, there is nothing wrong with it, otherwise he should not enter upon her until she becomes pure, for fear of his doing something that is forbidden.

Reckoning the ‘iddah of divorce by means of the menstrual cycle

If a man divorces his wife after having had intercourse with her or being alone with her, then she has to observe an ‘iddah of three complete menstrual cycles, if she is a woman who menstruates and she is not pregnant, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And divorced women shall wait (as regards their marriage) for three menstrual periods” [al-Baqarah 2:228]

If she is pregnant, her ‘iddah lasts until her pregnancy ends, whether the time is long or short, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And for those who are pregnant (whether they are divorced or their husbands are dead), their ‘Iddah (prescribed period) is until they lay down their burden.” [al-Talaq 65:4]

If a woman does not menstruate because she is old or she had had a hysterectomy, or for some other reason and there is no hope that she will menstruate again, then her 'iddah is three months,

because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And those of your women as have passed the age of monthly courses, for them the ‘Iddah (prescribed period), if you have doubt (about their periods), is three months; and for those who have no courses [(i.e. they are still immature) their ‘Iddah (prescribed period) is three months likewise.” [al-Talaq 65:4]

If a woman normally menstruates but her menses has ceased for a reason such as sickness or breastfeeding, then she should observe the 'iddah no matter how long it lasts, until her menses returns and she can count her 'iddah. If the reason ceases but her periods do not come back, such as if she recovers from sickness or stops breastfeeding and still does not menstruate, then she should observe ‘iddah for a full year from the time the reason ceased. This is the correct view which is based on Islamic principles, because if the reason ceases and her periods do not come back, she is like one whose periods have stopped for no apparent reason, and if her periods stop for no apparent reason then she should observe an ‘iddah of one year – nine months for pregnancy based on the usual length of pregnancy, and three months for the 'iddah.

*But if the divorce takes place after the marriage contract is done and before intimacy or being alone together, then there is no 'iddah at all, whether it is reckoned by the menstrual cycle or otherwise, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe! When you marry believing women, and then divorce them before you have sexual intercourse with them, no ‘Iddah [divorce prescribed period, see (V.65:4)] have you to count in respect of them.” [al-Ahzab 33:49]

Menses and establishing the absence of pregnancy

This is required every time there is a need for a ruling that there is no pregnancy. There are many issues connected to this.

How to perform ghusl after menstruation

When the menstruating woman’s period ends, she must do ghusl by purifying her entire body, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to Fatimah bint Abu Hubaysh: “When the time of your menses comes, stop praying, then when it ends, do ghusl and pray.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari)

*The minimum that is required for ghusl is to ensure that water reaches every part of the body, even beneath the hair. But it is better if it is done in the manner mentioned in the hadith from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), when Asma bint Shakl asked him how a menstruating woman should do ghusl. He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: One of you should take her water and lotus leaves and purify herself and purify herself well. Then she should pour water over her head and rub it vigorously, so that it reaches the roots of her hair, and pour water over herself. Then she should take a piece of cloth that is scented with musk and purify herself with it.” Asma said: “How should she purify herself with it?” He said: ‘Subhan Allah, let her purify herself with it.” ‘Aishah said to her: “She should follow the traces of blood.” (Narrated by Muslim)

*She does not have to undo the braids in her hair, unless they are tied so tightly that she fears that the water will not reach the roots, because of the hadith of Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) that is narrated in Sahih Muslim, where she asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: I am a woman with braided hair; should I undo it when doing ghusl following menses or for janabah? He said: “No, rather it will be sufficient for you to pour three handfuls of water on your head, then pour water over yourself and you will be purified.”

If a menstruating woman becomes pure during the time for prayer, she must hasten to do ghusl so that she can offer the prayer on time. If she is travelling and does not have any water, or she has water but she is afraid that she may be harmed by using it, or she is sick and the water will harm her, then she should do tayammum instead of ghusl, until the reason for not doing it ceases, then she should do ghusl.

Some women become pure at the time for prayer, but they delay ghusl until later, saying that they cannot purify themselves fully in this time. But this is no excuse, because they can limit themselves to the minimum that is required in ghusl and do the prayer on time, then when they have more time they can purify themselves more fully."

These are the most important rulings that have to do with menses in women.

Source: *Risalah fi'l-Dima al-Tabi'iyyah li'l-Nisa'* by Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him)