219137 - Is Gelatin Halal?

the question

I was trying to find out the correct ruling on gelatin which comes from haram ingredients (such as pork) and the matter is a bit controversial. I even read two fatwas in this website, fatwa nr. 210 and fatwa nr. 118266 and according to my understanding they are opposing each other regarding the same thing. On one of them, it says that if the product did not change its initial state, then it is haram, meaning the gelatin coming from pork can or cannot change from its origin state. And on the other fatwa, it says that the gelatin does change its state of origin. Can you reconcile between them and guide me to the correct ruling regarding gelatin?

Summary of answer

It is not permissible to consume foods, drinks and medicines that contain gelatin derived from the skin of pigs or other impure substances. It is possible to manufacture gelatin from animals that are slaughtered in the prescribed manner, and it will serve the same purpose in manufacturing medicine or food. For more, see the detailed answer.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

What is animal gelatin?

“Animal gelatin is a soft, viscous substance that is not soluble in water. It is extracted from animal bones and tissues by means of lengthy boiling in water.” (Al-Mu‘jam al-Waseet, 1/150)

It says in al-Mawsu‘ah al-‘Arabiyyah al-‘Alamiyyah: “Gelatin is a protein substance that is extracted from the skin and bones of animals.

Raw gelatin is extracted from the skin or bones of camels, cattle, sheep and pigs.

Gelatin is a substance that is included in many manufactured foods , such as pastry and children's foods, and in the manufacture of yoghurt, cheese, ice cream, pancakes, drinks, juices, and some ready-made foods in the form of powder (jello and puddings), some types of yoghurt, chewing gum and gummy candies. It is also used in the manufacture of medicines, such as capsules. It is used in the production of toothpaste, lotions and creams, and in the production of suppositories and pessaries.

Can gelatin be extracted from the skin, sinews and bones of animals?

There is nothing wrong with extracting gelatin from the skin, sinews and bones of animals that are permissible to eat and have been slaughtered in the prescribed manner, or from plants that are not harmful or poisonous.

This type of gelatin is permissible, and there is nothing wrong with using it or consuming it in food or medicine . See: Mawsu'ah al-Fiqh al-Islami (4/329)

It is not permissible to extract gelatin from the flesh, bones and skin of pigs or permissible animals that have not been slaughtered in the prescribed manner.

It says in a statement of the Islamic Fiqh Council: "It is permissible to use gelatin that is extracted from permissible substances and permissible animals that have been slaughtered in the prescribed manner, and it is not permissible to extract it from haram sources such as the skin and bones of pigs and other haram animals and haram substances." (Qararat al-Majma' al-Fiqhi al-Islami, Muslim World League, p. 85)

Ruling on consuming gelatin

Although we say that it is haram to extract gelatin from these haram substances, the ruling on consuming it after it has been introduced into the manufacture of food and medicine depends on whether the gelatin was transformed after being introduced into the manufacturing process.

If, after manufacture and treatment the gelatin has turned into another substance that differs in its characteristics from the impure substance from which it was extracted, then there is nothing wrong with eating it or using it.

But if it has not been changed completely, and it still retains some of the characteristics of the impure substance from which it was taken, then it is not permissible to consume it under any circumstances, because it is part of the pig or impure substance.

By referring to the words of specialists concerning this matter, it is clear that they differ concerning this issue. Some of them say that transformation in the case of gelatin is complete, and others say that this is not the case.

Some researchers stated that gelatin which is derived from the bones and skin of cattle and pigs has undergone a complete transformation and is different from the substance from which it was derived, and that it has acquired chemical properties that differ from those of the original substance from which it was extracted, thus it comes under what the scholars have said about transformation.

This view was adopted by the Islamic Organization for Medical Science. In their statement it says: Istihalah (process of transformation) means that a substance changes into another substance with different characteristics, so an impure substance may change into a pure substance, and a haram substance may change into one that is permissible according to Shari’ah.

Based on that: gelatin that is produced by means of a process of transformation from the bones, skin and sinews of impure animals is tahir (pure) and it is permissible to eat it.”

However others disagreed and said that the chemical processes to which the skin and bones of pigs are subjected in order to extract gelatin do not result in complete transformation. Rather it is a partial transformation, because the gelatin still retains some of the characteristics of the impure substance from which it was taken.

Dr. Wafeeq ash-Sharqawi (President of the administrative committee of the Arabian Company for

Gelatin Products in Egypt) said:

“The skin and bones of pigs do not undergo a complete transformation; rather it is a partial transformation and by means of testing it is possible to determine the origin of the gelatin that is extracted from the skin and bones of pigs after they are subjected to the chemical processes by means of which gelatin is extracted. That is because of the presence of some properties in this gelatin, from which it is possible to determine its origin. So we cannot say that the parts of the pig that are turned into gelatin have undergone a complete transformation.” (Majallat al-Buhuth al-Fiqhiyyah al-Mu‘asirah, 31/28)

Reasons why it is impermissible to use gelatin in foods and medicine

What appears to be more correct is the view that it is not permissible to use gelatin in foods , medicines or anything else if it is derived from an impure substance, for several reasons:

1- A number of specialists have stated that the transformation is not complete, and that what has been done to the skin and bones of pigs is a manufacturing process, not a process of transformation. So the porcine material remains subject to the prohibition and is regarded as impure, and anything that is manufactured from it comes under the same ruling.

2- The fact that there is some doubt concerning this matter (namely the question of whether the transformation is complete or otherwise) prompts us to adhere to the original ruling, which is that this substance is impure unless it is proven that this is a real transformation.

3- The view of many of the scholars is that the ruling on an impure substance does not change even if it is deemed to have been transformed. Therefore their view is that using this kind of gelatin is haram, because its origin is impure. No matter how much the substance changes, the ruling does not change.

Even though this view is not more likely to be correct, it prompts us to be cautious with regard to many matters in which we cannot be certain that the process of transformation has indeed taken place.

4- The view that this kind of gelatin is haram is the view of many contemporary scholars.

It says in a statement issued by the Islamic Fiqh Council in Jeddah:

“It is not permissible for the Muslim to use yeast and gelatin derived from pig sources in food.

The availability of yeast and gelatin derived from vegetable sources or animals slaughtered in the prescribed manner means that there is no need for that (i.e., gelatin from haram sources).” (Qararaat Majma‘ al-Fiqh al-Islami, p. 90)

Is gelatin halal?

The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked: Is gelatin haram?

They replied:

“If the gelatin is derived from something haram, such as pork or the skin, bones etc. of pigs, then it is haram. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “Forbidden to you (for food) are: Al-Maytatah (the dead animals - cattle-beast not slaughtered), blood, the flesh of swine” [al-Maidah 5:3].

The scholars unanimously agreed that pig fat is included in this prohibition. If no haram substances or ingredients are involved in the production of gelatin, then there is nothing wrong with it.” (Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Daimah, 22/260)

To sum up:

It is not permissible to consume foods, drinks and medicines that contain gelatin derived from the skin of pigs or other impure substances, especially when alternatives are available in the form of animals which Allah has permitted. It is possible to manufacture gelatin from these animals that are slaughtered in the prescribed manner, and it will serve the same purpose in manufacturing medicine or food.

References

For more information please, please see the following:

An-Nawazil fi’l-Ashribah by Zayn al-‘Abidin al-Idrisi, p. 287

Al-Mustakhlas min an-Najis wa Hukmuhu, compiled by Nasri Rashid, p. 113

Ahkam al-Adwiyah fi ash-Shari‘ah al-Islamiyyah by Hasan al-Fakki, p. 331

Majallat al-Buhuth al-Fiqhiyyah al-Mu‘asirah (issue no. 31, p. 6-38)

An-Nawazil fi’l-At‘imah by Badriyyah al-Harithi (1/459)

And Allah knows best.