329200 - The definition of istihadah and is there a difference between it and irregular bleeding?

the question

What exactly is istihadah? If a brownish or yellowish discharge appears after the menses has ended, is this istihadah, and does the woman have to clean herself with water and use pads, and do wudu’ when the time for each prayer comes? And does her wudu’ become invalid when the time for the next prayer comes? Because that could be difficult for me sometimes, especially when I am outside the house. Previously, I used to clean myself with water and repeat wudu’ only when I saw the brownish discharge, meaning that if I saw it on my garment, I would wash it and do wudu’, but I did not do wudu’ at the time of every prayer. What is the right thing to do?

And if a woman is experiencing istihadah, meaning that she sees a few drops of light blood sometime after her previous menses ended, then she gets her usual menstrual bleeding, and that ends when she sees the white discharge, is the white discharge sufficient to rule that both her menses and istihadah have ended? Is the woman now regarded as being pure again? Please note that before this menses ended, she came under the ruling on istihadah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly: What is meant by istihadah?

Istihadah is bleeding that cannot be menses (hayd), such as bleeding that lasts for longer than the maximum length of menses, which is fifteen days according to the majority of scholars, or it lasts for less than the minimum duration of menses, which is one day and one night according to the majority of scholars.

In *Al-Mawsu`ah al-Fiqhiyyah* (3/197) it says:

In linguistic terms, istihadah refers to bleeding that is ongoing and does not stop, and occurs at times other than the usual days of menses, and it does not come from the same source as menses; rather it comes from a vein that is called *al-`adhil*.

The Hanafis defined istihadah as: bleeding from a vein that ruptures, and not from the uterus.

The Shafa`is defined it as irregular bleeding that comes from a vein at the base of the uterus that is called *al-`adhil*. Ar-Ramli said: Istihadah is bleeding that a woman may experience that is different from menses and postpartum bleeding, whether it follows in directly from them or not. And he gave as an example of that bleeding that a minor girl may experience.

End quote.

Shaykh `Abdullah ibn `Aqil (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The woman who experiences istihadah is the one who sees bleeding that cannot be menses or postpartum bleeding, such as one whose bleeding continues beyond the maximum time of menses, or bleeding that lasts for less than one day and one night, or bleeding that may occur before a girl reaches the age of nine years, or what a pregnant woman may see during her pregnancy. That is in contrast to that which occurs two or three days before giving birth and is accompanied by contractions, and the like; that blood is regarded as part of nifas (postpartum bleeding), but it does not decrease the counting of the days of nifas [which are counted from the day the woman gives birth].

These and similar matters are istihadah. Irregular bleeding (*ad-dam al-fasid*) is a term which is more general in meaning than that.

End quote from *Fatawa ash-Shaykh* (1/88).

Secondly: Rulings having to do with blood or brownish

and yellowish discharge if it occurs after menses has ended

If blood or brownish and yellowish discharge appears after menses has ended, then it depends:

1. If it is ongoing and does not stop for long enough to do wudu' and pray, then the woman must wash herself with water, use a pad and do wudu' when the time for each prayer begins, then she should pray even if she is bleeding whilst praying, and she may pray whatever she wants to of obligatory and supererogatory prayers. Her wudu' becomes invalid when the time for the next prayer begins, if there was any bleeding or discharge.

It says in *Sharh Muntaha al-Iradat* (1/120): Anyone whose minor impurity is ongoing, whether that is due to istihadah, urinary incontinence, emission of madhiy, breaking wind, a wound that does not stop bleeding, or a nosebleed, must wash the contaminated area to remove the impurity, and take measures to prevent what is coming out as much as possible, such as inserting cotton or putting a clean cloth over it…

But he does not have to repeat that – namely washing and taking the measures mentioned above – for every prayer, unless he becomes heedless about it, because when the thing that invalidates his wudu' is overwhelming, he cannot help it…

And the one whose wudu' is invalidated constantly should do wudu' whenever the time for prayer begins, if something comes out. End quote.

2. If she [the woman experiencing istihadah] knows that when it stops, it will stop for long enough to do wudu' and pray, then she must wait for that time, so that she can offer her prayer in a state of purity. Then if anything comes out of her whilst she is praying, she should repeat her wudu' and prayer.

It says in *Matalib Uli an-Nuha* (1/266): If the ongoing emission [of that which invalidates wudu'] regularly ceases for long enough to purify herself and pray, then it becomes obligatory to do the

obligatory prayers during that time… Because in that case it has become possible to offer the prayer in the proper manner, and the person has no excuse and there is no necessity [to avail oneself of the concession], just like one who has no excuse.

It makes no difference if the ongoing bleeding stops for a short time that is not sufficient to do wudu’ and pray, but it makes it disallowed to start a prayer and carry on with it, because of the possibility that the bleeding is still ongoing, meaning that it makes no difference whether the cessation of bleeding varies, coming earlier or later, or coming a few times or many times, or happening once and never happening again, as there is no pattern or regular time for when it comes or when it ceases. In that case, she comes under the same ruling as one whose bleeding is ongoing, meaning that her wudu’ becomes invalid whenever her bleeding stops for long enough to do wudu’ and pray, unlike one whose cessation of bleeding is too short to do wudu’ and pray. But she should start her prayer and carry on with it as soon as the bleeding stops, even if she is not sure whether cessation of bleeding will last long enough for her to do wudu’ and pray, because the cessation of bleeding does not have a regular pattern in her case; therefore she is allowed to pray, because of hardship. End quote.

Thirdly: if a woman sees the white discharge, then her menses has ended

If a woman sees the white discharge, then her menses has ended, so if any blood or brownish or yellowish discharge appears after that and continues, this comes under the heading of irregular bleeding or istihadah, and if it does not continue, then she does not come under the ruling on istihadah, and it makes no difference whether she experienced istihadah before that, for Allah, may He be Exalted, may grant her well-being.

Rather we say that this is irregular bleeding or istihadah based on the fact that some scholars differentiated between the two, as they described istihadah as that which is connected to or follows on directly from menses, so the woman who is experiencing istihadah does not see the white discharge. This is a mere difference in names, but the rulings do not differ.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The author of *Al-Hawi* said:

Women are of four types: One who is pure, one who is menstruating, one who is experiencing istihadah, and one who is experiencing irregular bleeding. The one who is pure is the one who is experiencing no discharge; the one who is menstruating is one who sees menstrual blood at the time of her menses that meets all the conditions thereof; the one who is experiencing istihadah is the one who experiences bleeding following on immediately from her menses that is not the same as menstrual blood; and the one who is experiencing irregular bleeding is one who experiences sudden bleeding that is not menstrual blood.

These are the words of the author of *Al-Hawi*; before that he also said: Ash-Shafa`i said: If a woman sees bleeding before the age of nine years, it is irregular bleeding and it is not to be called istihadah, because istihadah can only be bleeding that follows on from menses…

This is the view of the author of *Al-Hawi*. What he meant is that istihadah can only refer to bleeding that follows on from menses but is not menstrual blood.

As for bleeding that does not follow on from menses, it is irregular bleeding and cannot be called istihadah. And a number of scholars agreed with him.

However, the majority say that all of it may be called istihadah. They said: Istihadah is of two types: one type that follows on immediately from menses, which we have discussed above, and another type that does not follow on immediately from menses, such as if a young girl below the age of nine years sees blood, or an adult woman sees blood but it stops before lasting one day and night. That comes under the ruling on minor impurity.

These two types were also mentioned clearly by Abu `Abdillah az-Zubayri, al-Qadi Husayn, al-Mutawalli, al-Baghawi, as-Sarkhasi in *Al-Amali*, the author of *Al-`Iddah*, and others. This is the more correct view, and is in accordance with what we quoted above from al-Azhari and other scholars of Arabic language, which says that istihadah is bleeding that occurs other than at the time of menses.

End quote from *Al-Majmu`* (2/346).

It says in *Rawdat at-Talibin* (1/137): Istihadah may refer to any bleeding that a woman experiences other than menses and postpartum bleeding, whether it follows on directly from menses that goes beyond the maximum duration thereof, or it does not follow on directly from menses, such as bleeding that a seven year old girl may experience, for example. This word may also refer specifically to that which follows on directly from menses, and other types of bleeding may be called irregular bleeding (*dam fasad*), but the rulings do not differ in either case. End quote.

And Allah knows best.