



הלכות יום כיפור לנשים מעוברות

THE LAWS OF FASTING ON YOM KIPPUR FOR EXPECTANT WOMEN

שליט"א Horav Shmuel Felder Reviewed by



✿ Before Yom Kippur:

On *Erev Yom Kippur*, it is a mitzvah for everybody to drink and eat properly in order to have the needed strength to fast. It is especially important for women during pregnancy to eat and drink appropriately. Starting from the morning before the fast, one should drink as much liquid as possible.

✿ On Yom Kippur:

During *Yom Kippur*, one should avoid exerting themselves and should stay in a cool environment throughout the entire day.


Staying in *shul* for long periods of time is not advisable for a woman during pregnancy as this can cause her to become weak. It is vital that she ensures that she does not become weak and dehydrated as this can lead to a dangerous situation for her and her unborn child. Therefore, expectant women should see to it that they are in a relaxed and cool environment for the duration of the fast.

✿ Help at Home:

If an expectant woman has other children at home, it should be seen to that she does not have to work too hard taking care of her children on *Yom Kippur*. Rather, she should be provided with help so that she does not exert herself by singlehandedly taking care of the children.

It is the husband's obligation to ensure that his wife will have a manageable fast. Rav Elyashiv *zt"l* said that a husband should even stay home from *shul*, if necessary, in order to help with the children so that his wife will be able to fast. This is because fasting on





Yom Kippur takes precedence to the husband davening with a *minyan*¹.

✿ **Sickness:**

A woman who suffers from any type of illness or condition should consult with a doctor (and afterwards with a *Rov*) before *Yom Kippur* to ascertain whether she may fast or whether she must drink with *shiurim* (i.e. drinking 1 oz. of liquid at a time, waiting 9 minutes in between each drink.)

(Note: The following *halachos* pertain to a standard, non-high risk, pregnancy. High-risk pregnancies will be discussed below.)

✿ **Dizziness and Lightheadedness:**

Question: *What should an expectant woman do if she starts feeling light-headed or dizzy while fasting on Yom Kippur?*

Answer: First, she should lie in bed and relax to see if the dizziness passes. If she sees that it is not going away, this may be a reason for concern as dizziness and light-headedness may be a result of a lack of sufficient fluids in the body which can lead to dehydration and may cause early labor. Therefore, if the dizziness does not go away with rest, she must drink something².


✿ **Contractions:**

Question: *When someone expecting gets contractions on Yom Kippur, what should she do?*

Answer: Fasting can sometimes cause contractions. One or two contractions or a few contractions that are very spread apart are not a matter of concern. However, a lot of contractions can cause her to go into early labor, which is dangerous. In such a circumstance, she must drink in order to stop the contractions.

¹These rules also apply for non-expectant women who need help at home in order to cope with the fast.

² The method of drinking will be explained later.



When a woman **begins** to feel contractions, she should go to bed and lie down on the side most comfortable to her and remain in a relaxed position for the rest of *Yom Kippur*, making sure not to exert herself in any way.

If the contractions continue and she experiences four contractions in the span of approximately one hour, she must drink immediately in order to stop the contractions³. Once the contractions stop, she should return to bed and rest for the remainder of the day while drinking one cup of liquid every hour in increments of 1 oz. every 4½ minutes. (see footnote ⁴)


One should be aware that the rule of four contractions in an hour is not “set in stone”. If a woman determines that the contractions feel very strong or she feels like she is experiencing the onset of labor, she should not wait until the fourth contraction and should drink right away to get them to stop.

Question: *At what point in the pregnancy is it considered safe to go into labor, and it therefore would not be permitted to drink to stop contractions?*

Answer: If a woman is before her 37th week of pregnancy, it is not safe to go into labor and she must drink to stop the contractions. If she has passed her 37th week of pregnancy, which is approximately 10 days into her 9th month, then it is safe for her to go into labor and she is not permitted to drink in order to

³ A good way to keep count of the contractions is by looking at a clock after she experiences her first contraction. If after her fourth contraction an hour or less has passed since the first, she should drink something immediately.

⁴ A woman who had 4 contractions within an hour, **towards the end of the fast**, and stopped the contractions by drinking plentifully to hydrate herself, within 2 hours or less to the end of the fast, has no need to continue drinking until the fast is over, unless she starts feeling symptoms again.



stop the contractions⁵. Rather, she must let herself go into labor. Once she is in active labor, with contractions five to seven minutes apart, she is permitted to drink or eat in order to have strength to give birth.

☞ **What to Drink:**

Question: *In the aforementioned situations where one is required to drink, are there any specific drinks which are preferable?*

Answer: Because she is fasting, she should drink something with sugar in it, such as grape juice, orange juice or milk, as the sugar will help stop the symptoms more rapidly and efficiently.

☞ **Method of Drinking:**

Question: *When one has to drink in order to stop contractions, is there a preferable method in which to drink?*

Answer: It is *halachically* permitted to drink in the **regular fashion**. However, there is a *halachic* benefit for her to put the drink in a bowl and “eat it” with a spoon. By doing so, she ensures that she will not drink a full *shiur* of liquid in the short time span of drinking a *revi'is* (which is considered the time frame according to one opinion cited in the *Shulchan Aruch*.) Furthermore, drinking in the above fashion will diminish the need to drink more and more in order to stop the contractions⁶.

⁵ A simple way to calculate whether she is past 9 months and 10 days is to **look at the due date**. If she is due in the month of *Tishrei* she must let herself go into labor. However, if the due date is in the month of *Cheshvan* she must drink to stop the contractions.

⁶ By drinking with a spoon, one will see results soon after she finishes her bowl because the body has some time to absorb the liquid. It is important to note that when one has to drink to stop the contractions, it is forbidden to be “*machmir*” to drink with *shiurim*, rather one has to drink normally or as described here (with a spoon).



☞ **Fever:**

Question: *What should an expecting woman do if she feels feverish on Yom Kippur?*

Answer: If the fever is above 100.5-degrees, she should drink something immediately so that she does not become dehydrated. Usually it will be sufficient for her to drink 1 oz. every 4½ minutes until she feels better. Additionally, she should take medication (i.e. Aspirin, Tylenol) to lower the fever. If she is not experiencing any other symptoms, these steps should suffice, even if the fever gets higher.

However, if along with the fever she experiences other symptoms, such as: leakage or discharge, abdominal pain (i.e. pain when she touches her abdominal area), or a bad odor emanating from herself, she must call a doctor to ascertain what steps must be taken¹.

☞ **Staining:**

Question: *If an expecting woman is staining on Yom Kippur, is there a need to drink?*

Answer: If it is only light staining, she does not have to be concerned. This is not sign of dehydration. She should simply rest in bed and relax. If the staining continues steadily or if she stains heavily, this may be a symptom of dehydration and she should drink something in order to stop the staining. If this does not help to stop the staining, a doctor should be called.


☞ **High-Risk Pregnancy:**

Question: *Are the halachos different for a high-risk pregnancy?*

Answer: If one is before the 9th month of pregnancy but is already **dilated much more than regular**, it is usually not possible for her to fast the entire Yom Kippur. She must drink less than a *shiur* (1 oz. then wait 9 minutes before drinking the next 1 oz.) in order

¹When calling on Yom Kippur, one should do so with a *shinui* (i.e. in an unusual fashion, such as dialing with a knuckle.)





to have enough liquid in her body to ensure that she will not go into early labor. If she is already in her 9th month of pregnancy², then she is permitted to allow herself to go into labor.

If a woman already **had to have a labor stopped during this pregnancy**, she should **not** fast on Yom Kippur unless she first confirms with a doctor that it was not a genuine labor and that there is no danger for her to fast.

A woman who has a **history of premature delivery** must consult with a doctor (and *Rov*) to determine whether she must drink with *shiurim* on Yom Kippur, as there is reason to suspect that fasting may cause her to deliver prematurely again.

If a woman is expecting multiples, she may have to proceed more cautiously than with a standard pregnancy, and she should consult with her doctor (and *Rov*) and follow their instructions.

☪ **Motzoei Yom Kippur:**

On *Motzoei Yom Kippur*, immediately after the *zman*³, one may drink water even before hearing *Havdalah*. One just has to say, "ברוך המבדיל בן קודש לחול". In order to drink any other type of drink or eat any food, one must first hear *Havdalah* (or recite it on her own).

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For questions or additional copies, please call Rabbi S.Y. Haberfeld **732-942-9609**.

² See earlier question where it was discussed at what point in the 9th month it is safe to go into labor and apply here.

³ One who is very weak and is in great need to eat or drink may rely on the *zman* of *tzeis hakochovim* of Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*, which is 50 minutes after *shkiyah*.