



Answers to Questions from "Making Mikveh Safer" Webinar

1. Is there any reason to bring an extra towel to put on the handrail? **If you want to cover your head during the bracha bring another towel that you will lean toward (not have the balanit touch). Before you put your towel down, ask the balanit to make sure she has wiped the handrail, or keep your towel in your own bag.**
2. Women not feeling well shouldn't go. Does that include a cold, never a fever? **Right now, if you have an acute infection of any kind don't go. If it's a chronic condition (like a lingering allergy with sneezing) you can go.**
3. How do the Israeli health regulations match up with US health guidelines? **They are pretty parallel.**
4. I understand that in Efrat, at least one of the mikvehs adopted a log system in which each woman logs in: i.e. Name, phone number, time in, time out - and that way, if someone comes down with Corona, the right women can be notified. Is this advisable practice for all mikvaot? I'm not sure it's feasible given all of the extra work that balaniyot are doing. **If possible, that sounds like a good idea.**
5. What happens if the mikveh is more than 100 meters away from home **Mikveh is in the list of exceptions when you can walk beyond 100 m.**
6. At what point after a positive covid-19 test may a woman safely return to the mikveh in the event that it is impossible for her to be retested? **Misrad Habriut tells a corona infected person when they are safe to go out.**
7. There are mikvaot where women often *tovel* by themselves and they have a net for halakhic reasons to catch their hair, which goes into the water. Lots of women use it. Is that okay? **The net should be laundered between women; or women should bring their own net from home.**
8. Lots of women touch the pay machines at the mikveh. Do they need to be disinfected? **Women don't need to wipe them, just to alcohol rub their hands after using, as with any high-touch surface.**
9. Is there a reason to not immerse in the ocean, a fresh water lake or spring? The Kinneret, maayanot? Can the virus be transferred that way? **An ocean, a flowing stream, or the Kinneret, are fine. However, at present it is illegal in Israel to go to these places, and therefore it is forbidden to immerse there. One also needs to be careful about rip tides and other water dangers.**
10. **If the attendants in a particular mikvah are not following the regulations can a woman still go there? Let's say that the water is okay but they're not doing anything else? No social distancing, not wiping things down correctly, allowing people to touch things, can a woman still feel safe? I would advise steering clear of such mikvaot (and actually reporting them to the district health**



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office) and The Eden Center (naomi@theEdenCenter.com). If they're being lax about the regulations, don't count on it being a safe environment.

11. Is there any oversight at all in the mikvaot here? Who is actually checking these levels? It's not just about the water though... It's about the bathrooms, the door handles, the floors - who is supporting/checking the balaniyot in this regard? How can we know if the mikvaot are following the guidelines? **There is a representative of Misrad Habriut who goes check Chlorine levels, and the local moetzta is in charge of overseeing that the regulations are put into effect. However, the rep at the Ministry says there is not enough man-power (especially at the moment) for her to check everywhere. Likewise, some moetzot are more on top of things than others. It's up to every woman to ask the balaniot, in a respectful way, how often they are checking/chlorinating the water, how they have changed their cleaning practices now, if they are implementing social distancing, and whether she can make an appointment. If you see the regulations are not being followed 1) find a different mikveh to use 2) report it to the local religious council 3) inform The Eden Center (naomi@theEdenCenter.com) so we can also follow up 4) inform other women in your area so they also don't go there.**
12. Often the Balanit extends her hand when you exit the mikveh, have they been instructed to stop that? **Yes, they have been told not to have any physical contact. Again, if you encounter a violation, please let The Eden Center know (info@theEdenCenter.com).**
13. What about holding on to the railing going into the mikveh water? How do you know if its clean? **Ask the attendant if she has cleaned it or request that she clean it again in front of you.**
14. Something else that has not been addressed is how to support the balaniyot. In my city, we tried to organize for volunteers to help with cleaning the prep room between tovlot and with answering the phones, but the city said we couldn't do so. The balaniyot are dealing with at least double with work...How can we help? **Be good to them – Make sure to say thank you. Come prepared and bring your own towel. Get in and out quickly to keep thing moving, and make sure that they know that they should open the windows for ventilation and use Bleach that has been diluted so that it doesn't affect them. (40ml to a liter of water = just under 3T to a liter). Also let them know that chlorine levels that are too high can adversely affect them and the tovlot.**
15. Most mikvaot aren't big enough for the balanit to be in the room at a 2M distance. **Many have 2m distance when the woman is in the water. If there is not enough room, she can stand outside of the door and look in. Alternately in Israel, a woman is legally allowed to immerse without a balanit.**
16. Can the idea of bringing your young children with you if your husband is unavailable to watch them be addressed? since babysitters are illegal. **No, that would not be wise since that would impede social distancing in the mikveh.**



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17. What is minimum of home prep.? The shortest amount of time it takes you to properly clean your body head to toe and take a shower (or short bath) – 20 minutes? It is important not to be in a rush, take as much time as you need. Generally, anywhere between 20 -30 minutes should be enough, but it can take longer.
18. I saw American mikvaot recommending that when going home the husband should touch the wife, then she should go directly into the shower at home. Any value in this or similar recommendation? The recommendation is that a woman should shower upon returning from the mikveh. Shaking hands is a minhag not everyone practices. If she does shake his hand, he should also wash it with soap and water before touching other things.
19. Do you support the suggestion to stop taking placebo pills so as to not get a period and avoid mikveh altogether to keep from medical risk? Ask your own doctor if this is recommended for YOU. If you feel comfortable with it medically, there is no problem from a halakhic point of view in preventing niddah status. Most doctors permit doubling up on packets of oral contraceptives.
20. I'm in week 6 of pregnancy and need to go to the Mikveh this week because of implantation bleeding. Are there any extra concerns going to the Mikveh while pregnant? Ask your doctor about going in general at this stage of pregnancy. My understanding from the medical experts is that it is not a problem. There are no extra concerns because of Cornona, but you can try to be the first woman in the mikveh after the water has been changed and the chlorine added.
21. On Shabbat will it be difficult for the *balaniyot* to maintain the sterile conditions at the mikveh? The instructions given are to clean between women on Shabbat as well.
22. Any recommendations re sanitizing the mikveh between patrons in the 3 day Yom tov in the USA coming up See above per Shabbat.
23. Under such a situation, couldn't a woman go right before Shabbat to the mikveh and arrange to only see her husband after *tzais hakochavim*? So that she could drive there right before Shabbat, go in get home and shower Yes. Practically the mikveh attendants need to permit this and this may need the input and approval of the local Rabbi.
24. From my understanding a woman can prepare for the mikveh any time during the day even as early as sunrise if she wants peace and quiet. *Iyun* then before she goes? This is correct.
25. There are those opinions who say if there is only one *tevila* the *bracha* is made before immersing. It is like eating an apple first make a *bracha* then eat – or first you immerse and then make the *bracha*? The medical expert on our podcast said that there is not a problem in immersing twice and so you should immerse, make the *bracha* and immerse again. However, if you do not feel comfortable and wish to reduce the number of immersions Sefardim will say the *bracha* outside the mikveh and then immerse; Ashkenazim will dip and then say the *bracha* in the mikveh.