



# **Guidelines for the Ill on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur**

**Taken with permission from:  
*Guide to Traditional Jewish  
Observance in a Hospital*  
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## B. *Rosh Hashana*

*Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, is also commonly referred to as the Day of Judgment, as it marks the creation of humanity and is a time of reflection. It is a two-day holiday, with Sabbath-like restrictions, and one of its central observances is the sounding of the *Shofar*, a ram's horn.

1. Although rabbinic (not Torah) prohibitions may often be overridden for medical necessity on the second day of holidays (as discussed above), on *Rosh Hashanah* there is no difference between the first and second day.<sup>337</sup>
2. Although it is customary to have a new fruit or article of clothing in front of oneself when making the “*Shehecheyanu*” blessing on the second night of *Rosh Hashanah*, one may still recite the blessing even if one is unable to obtain such items.<sup>338</sup>
3. A man who lights holiday candles should recite the “*Shehecheyanu*” blessing when making *Kiddush*, but a woman should recite the blessing when she lights candles, and she should not repeat it if she makes *Kiddush* for herself.<sup>339</sup>
4. If one is unable to eat the various symbolic foods used for “*Simanim*” (“significant omens”), they may still recite the “*Yehi Ratzon*” prayers said over these foods.<sup>340</sup>

### *Shofar*

- 4a. One who is unable to go to synagogue to hear the *Shofar* must try to ensure that someone can come to them so that they can hear at least thirty *Shofar* blasts.<sup>341</sup>
- 4b. A man who blows *Shofar* on behalf of other men should say the blessings of “*Lishmoa Kol Shofar*” and “*Shehecheyanu*” even if he has already fulfilled the *Mitzvah* of *Shofar* himself.<sup>342</sup> If he is blowing *Shofar* on behalf of a woman: If she is *Sephardi*, the blessings should not be said,<sup>343</sup> if she is *Ashkenazi*, the blessings should be said by the woman.<sup>344</sup>
- 5a. One may hear the *Shofar* even if they have not yet said their morning prayers.<sup>345</sup>
- 5b. Although one should not eat before hearing the *Shofar*, one who is ill and would find it difficult to go without food until they will be able to hear the *Shofar*, may make *Kiddush* and eat before hearing *Shofar* (although they should say the morning prayers, or at least the blessings over the Torah and the first paragraph of *Shema*, before making *Kiddush*).<sup>346</sup>

<sup>337</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* OH 496:2 & *Mishnah Berurah* 5-6.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 600:2.

<sup>339</sup> *Lev Avraham* 17:16.

<sup>340</sup> *Nishmat Avraham* OH 583 (1). This is true even if one does not have the symbolic food in front of them at the time.

<sup>341</sup> *Lev Avraham*, 17:10.

<sup>342</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* OH 585:2 *Rema*; *Shulchan Aruch* OH 589:6 *Rema*.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 589:6.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, *Rema*.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, 17:13; *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 40:45.



Arranging for someone to blow *Shofar* in a patient's room can be facilitated by contacting the Spiritual Care office at 310 423 5550

## C. *Yom Kippur*

*Yom Kippur*—the Day of Atonement, beginning eight days after *Rosh Hashanah*—is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Jews refrain from all eating and drinking for this entire day (commencing before sundown and concluding after nightfall the following day). Other pleasures, such as bathing or applying non-medical ointments, are also restricted.

### Prayer

1. One who is unable to recite all of the *Yom Kippur* prayers should try to say at least the short confession (“*Viduy Katzar*”), “*Chatati, Aviti, Pashati*” and then ask God to cleanse and forgive them, and conclude with their own praise of God.<sup>347</sup>
2. One who is in an unclean environment may nevertheless recite the “*Viduy*” (confession) of *Yom Kippur* if they have no other choice, but without mentioning God's name.<sup>348</sup>

### Eating

- 3a. Just as it is permitted, and even obligatory, to violate the laws of Shabbat in order to save life, so too it is a *Mitzvah* for a person whose life may be in danger to eat and drink (or transgress any other prohibition of the day) on *Yom Kippur*. Even a person who is not currently in mortal danger, but may become dangerously ill [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept] if they do not eat or drink, must eat or drink on *Yom Kippur*.<sup>349</sup>
- 3b. One who decides to be “strict” and fast despite the directive of their doctor and rabbi not to do so, is not considered pious but like a shedder of blood, about whom we apply the verse, “your blood, of your souls, I will demand an account.”<sup>350</sup>
- 4a. A doctor's orders, irrespective of his or her religion, must be followed when they say that a patient must eat, even if the patient thinks that they can go without food.<sup>351</sup> If a doctor is not available, anyone who has any knowledge of medicine is trusted when they say that the patient must eat or drink to save their lives.<sup>352</sup>
- 4b. If one is instructed to eat or drink, and they have time to consult with a rabbi, they must do so, particularly to find out if they should eat normal amounts or in measurements (see next section for explanation of this concept). However, if the

<sup>347</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:39; *Mishnah Berurah* 607:12.

<sup>348</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:40, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach adds that in such a case one should also not have in mind to be fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of “*Viduy*.”

<sup>349</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:1.

<sup>350</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 618:5.

<sup>351</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 618:1.

<sup>352</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 618:1.

case is urgent and life-threatening, and the physician has ordered the patient to eat without any delay, the doctor's orders must be followed.<sup>353</sup>

- 4c. The patient's own opinion that he or she is in need of food overrides that of a physician who disagrees,<sup>354</sup> unless the physician is of the opinion that food would actually do the patient harm.<sup>355</sup>
5. One should stay in bed in order to be able to fast on *Yom Kippur* rather than consume food or drink (even if only by measurements) so that they will be able to attend synagogue.<sup>356</sup>
6. A patient who is fed via an NG tube or PEG may continue to be fed in this manner on *Yom Kippur* (though one should not initiate feeding of this sort just in order to avoid the ruling of the doctor or rabbi regarding eating or drinking on *Yom Kippur*).<sup>357</sup>
7. Even one who is permitted to eat on *Yom Kippur* as a result of their poor health should eat only enough to provide the necessary nutrition and not consume any treats that they do not need to sustain them.<sup>358</sup>
8. One who only needs to drink but can avoid eating, for example to prevent a kidney stone, may drink (even beverages besides water, such as milk with sugar or fruit juice), but may not eat. If they must drink normal amounts they may do so; otherwise they should drink only in measurements.<sup>359</sup>
9. A diabetic patient receiving insulin, either by continuous infusion pump or by multiple injections, should fast on *Yom Kippur* if their doctor agrees that this will not put them in danger, by adjusting doses of insulin (by measuring the blood glucose levels).<sup>360</sup>
10. In any situation in which a patient must eat on *Yom Kippur*, the rabbi's and the physician's opinion must be sought regarding whether it will be sufficient to feed the patient in measurements (discussed below) or if the patient needs to eat regular amounts. Furthermore, one must also determine if it is sufficient to provide only beverages, or if the patient must eat food as well. There may also be times when one is permitted to eat once on *Yom Kippur* because of a great need, but they may still not eat any more after that.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:5.

<sup>354</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 618:4.

<sup>355</sup> *Aruch Hashulchan* 618:5-6.

<sup>356</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:7.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:8-9.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:20.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:13.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:13.

<sup>361</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:14; *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:6.

## Blessings

11. One who must eat on *Yom Kippur* does not recite *Kiddush* or use two loaves of bread, even if it is also Shabbat.<sup>362</sup>
12. Patients who must eat on *Yom Kippur* are obligated to wash their hands if they eat bread in the same manner as they would were it not *Yom Kippur*.<sup>363</sup>
13. One who is going to eat an amount of bread equivalent to the volume of an egg (approximately 1.9-2.95 fl ounces) within nine minutes should also make the blessing over washing their hands. However, if one will not be eating this amount of bread, they should wash their hands without making the blessing.<sup>364</sup>
14. One who must eat on *Yom Kippur* makes the appropriate blessing before eating food, but when eating in “measurements” (as discussed below) they need only make the blessing once, and not repeat it every time they swallow food, unless they assumed that they would not need to eat any more.<sup>365</sup>
15. One who eats an amount of food equivalent to the size of an olive (approximately 1.1-1.5 ounces) within nine minutes must make the blessing after eating that food. If one ate bread, “*Yaaleh V’Yaavoh*” is inserted into the “*Birkat Hamazon*,” although if one forgot, they need not repeat the “*Birkat Hamazon*.”<sup>366</sup>

## Taking Medication on *Yom Kippur*

16. One who has a non-life-threatening serious illness [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept] or may become ill without medication, may swallow pills if their doctor requires them to, but only if they can do so without swallowing any water along with it. It may be worthwhile to practice swallowing medication without water before *Yom Kippur*. If one is unable to do this and must take the medications, one may use a minimal amount of water to assist them in swallowing, but the flavor of the water should be made bad tasting by adding something bitter.<sup>367</sup>
17. However, one who is dangerously ill [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept] or may become so if they don’t take their medication, may use undiluted water to help them swallow their medication if they are unable to do so without water.<sup>368</sup>
18. One who is healthy at the moment, but without medication will become ill, even not dangerously so (such as experience migraines or vomiting), may swallow a pill without water to prevent this condition. However, it is better to take the medication via a suppository, if possible.<sup>369</sup>

<sup>362</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 618:29; *Lev Avraham* 18:26.

<sup>363</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:25, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains that one would wash their entire hand despite the prohibition against washing on Yom Kippur because this is not washing for pleasure.

<sup>364</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 158:2.

<sup>365</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:23.

<sup>366</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:27; *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:33.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:11-12, Dr. Abraham quotes Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach as allowing drops of soap to be added to the water to render it poor tasting, so that it is also considered drinking in an unusual manner, which is permitted for a non-dangerously ill patient. Some advise putting bitter-tasting Echinacea in water to use as the bitter drink (one should consult with a health care professional to determine if it is advisable to consume Echinacea on a fast day); others advise using something that is not fit for food, like Maalox, to get the medication down.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, in the name of *Igrot Moshe OH* 3:91.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:12.

## i. Eating in “Measurements”

### Food

1. Though we have pointed out that one whose life may be endangered by fasting on *Yom Kippur* is obligated to eat, not all patients who are obligated to eat on *Yom Kippur* have the same exemption. Some patients' illnesses warrant only minimal eating or drinking as described below. This method is referred to as eating in “measurements” and it refers to eating less than a prescribed amount within a given period of time:
- 2a. The prohibition against eating on *Yom Kippur* is unique since “eating” isn't prohibited, but rather the Torah obligates “*Inuy*” or self-affliction (Leviticus 23:29). Eating an amount of food equivalent to a large date<sup>370</sup> is necessary to be considered culpable, because the rabbis ruled that any less than this does not put a person at ease and they are still “afflicted.”<sup>371</sup>  
This amount is approximately 30 ml (or cc),<sup>372</sup> which is equivalent to just under one liquid ounce. One should measure before *Yom Kippur* how much food can be squeezed into a one ounce whisky shot glass and eat just a bit under that amount.<sup>373</sup>
- 2b. It must be pointed out that these measurements apply to unique circumstances when one has specific permission to eat on *Yom Kippur* and only reference avoiding the punishment of “*Karet*” (spiritual excision) for eating on *Yom Kippur*. If it is not a life-threatening situation, partaking of even any amount of food or drink on *Yom Kippur*, regardless of how small, is prohibited by the Torah.<sup>374</sup>
3. One who is permitted to eat this minimal amount should preferably wait nine minutes (or at least 6-7 minutes)<sup>375</sup> from the time they finish the previous consumption until they begin eating or drinking again.<sup>376</sup> However, if the doctor determines that it is necessary for the patient to consume the food in a shorter span of time, one may do so.<sup>377</sup>
4. It is important to point out that these measurements govern the amount of food one eats, not the quality. One who must eat in this manner on *Yom Kippur* is thus advised to get the most out of their minimal consumption and choose foods with a lot of calories and nutrition to help sustain them throughout the day.<sup>378</sup> One should also discuss with their doctor what the ideal food or drink would be for them to consume in these small amounts.<sup>379</sup>

<sup>370</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 612:1.

<sup>371</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 612:1.

<sup>372</sup> *Nishmat Avraham OH* 612:1.

<sup>373</sup> Rabbi Gershon Bess.

<sup>374</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 612:5 & *Mishnah Berurah* 612:11.

<sup>375</sup> *Aruch Hashulchan OH* 618:14.

<sup>376</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:17; *Shulchan Aruch OH* 612:7.

<sup>377</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:19; *Lev Avraham* 18:17. If one is unable to wait nine minutes between each food intake, or even 6-7 minutes, they should try to wait two minutes at the very least, if possible (*Nishmat Avraham OH* 612:4(6)).

<sup>378</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:18.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:21.

5. Since eating in measurements is preferable to eating larger amounts, one whose health condition and rabbinic ruling allow them to eat in measurements should begin doing so in the morning, to prevent their condition from deteriorating, thus forcing them to eat a larger amount of food.<sup>380</sup>

## Beverages

- 6a. The amount of liquid consumed on *Yom Kippur* to be considered culpable is more than a cheek-full, because the rabbis ruled that any less than this does not put a person at ease and they are still “afflicted.”<sup>381</sup> For an adult this is generally about 40 ml of water,<sup>382</sup> which is about 1.3 ounces. The amounts of all liquids consumed, if one drinks different types, are added up and measured together for this purpose.<sup>383</sup>
- 6b. One can ascertain his or her personal “cheek-full” by filling their mouth completely with water, expelling the water into a measuring cup and dividing that amount in half. This number is the amount held by one cheek, and the amount permitted is slightly less than this amount.<sup>384</sup>
- 6c. It is advisable, but not obligatory, that all measurements be made before *Yom Kippur*.<sup>385</sup>
7. One who is permitted to drink in measurements may drink beverages other than water, such as milk with sugar or fruit juice.<sup>386</sup>
8. One should wait the same amount of time between drinks as is required for eating (paragraph 3 above), but if this is still insufficient for the patient, they should at least wait for a few moments (15-30 seconds)<sup>387</sup> between these minimal drinks.<sup>388</sup>
9. Amounts of food and beverage are not combined, so that one may eat the minimal amount and then immediately drink the minimal amount.<sup>389</sup> However, if food, such as bread, has been soaked in a liquid, the measurements are combined so that one may still not eat more than 30 ml of this combined product.<sup>390</sup>
10. If an item is normally chewed, then it is considered food, and if it is normally swallowed like a drink (such as porridge or sour cream), it is considered a beverage for these purposes.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39 fn. 69 (1979 edition).

<sup>381</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 612:9.

<sup>382</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:21.

<sup>383</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 612:23.

<sup>384</sup> Rabbi Dovid Heber, *Star-K Kashrus Guide to Halachic Food Measurements*, <http://www.star-k.org/kashrus/kk-issues-measurements.htm>.

<sup>385</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 618:21.

<sup>386</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:18 in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

<sup>387</sup> Rabbi Gershon Bess

<sup>388</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:22.

<sup>389</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 612:2.

<sup>390</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 612:4.

<sup>391</sup> *Nishmat Avraham OH* 612:4(6).

## ii. Pregnancy and Childbirth on *Yom Kippur*

- 1a. A pregnant woman who is well, and her fetus is well, must fast on *Yom Kippur* during all stages of pregnancy.<sup>392</sup> She should rest and avoid any strenuous activity or even going to synagogue. If she feels abnormal weakness she should drink in measurements, and if she needs, eat in measurements as well.<sup>393</sup>
- 1b. If she begins feeling regular contractions before she is full term, she should drink as much as necessary in order to stop the contractions. If she is full term and gets contractions, she should consult her obstetrician regarding drinking so as not to be dehydrated when giving birth.<sup>394</sup>
- 1c. Since a woman who has become pregnant following in vitro fertilization is more likely to miscarry during the first weeks after becoming pregnant, during these early stages of pregnancy she should drink in measurements.<sup>395</sup>
- 2a. From the time a woman is in active labor until seventy-two hours after she gives birth, she may not fast at all.<sup>396</sup>
- 2b. During this period, even if she and her doctor think that she is able to fast, she should eat, but in measurements.<sup>397</sup>
- 3a. After seventy-two hours following childbirth, i.e. from day four through day seven, the following rules apply:
  - If the woman wants to eat and the physician doesn't disagree, or if the physician considers it necessary and she doesn't think that she needs to, then in both of these cases she should eat normal amounts.
  - If she wants to eat but the physician does not consider it necessary, or if she is not sure and the physician does not say that she needs to eat, then she should eat only in measurements.
  - If she says that she does not need to eat and the physician agrees, she should fast.<sup>398</sup>
- 3b. These time categories are based on the number of hours since giving birth. Therefore a woman's category may change during *Yom Kippur* itself.<sup>399</sup>
4. After the seven days following childbirth, the woman is classified as one who has a non-life-threatening serious illness [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept] until day thirty. A woman in this category must fast<sup>400</sup> unless her condition deteriorates and she or her doctor feels that it may become life-threatening, in which case she must eat.<sup>401</sup>

<sup>392</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:30; *Shulchan Aruch OH* 618:1.

<sup>393</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:30.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid*; Rabbi Gershon Bess.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>396</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 617:4 & *Mishnah Berurah* 9, 13; *Mishnah Berurah* 330:10-11. During this time a woman may also wash, on *Yom Kippur*, any body parts that became soiled during child birth (*Torat Hayoledet* 55:15 (2nd ed.)).

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 617:4 & *Mishnah Berurah* 10; *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:12.

<sup>398</sup> *Lev Avraham* 18:34; *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:13.

<sup>399</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:15.

<sup>400</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 617:4.

<sup>401</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 617:12.



5. The above rules apply equally in the case of a woman who has a live birth, a stillbirth, an abortion, or miscarriage more than forty days after becoming pregnant.<sup>402</sup>
6. A nursing woman is obligated to fast on *Yom Kippur*.<sup>403</sup> If the baby drinks formula, she should feed the baby with formula rather than break her fast. However, she may drink (but not eat) in measurements if she would not otherwise have sufficient milk for her baby and the baby is entirely dependent on her milk for its sustenance, thus putting the baby's life in danger.<sup>404</sup> She should try to avoid this situation by drinking large quantities of liquid before *Yom Kippur* begins.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:16.

<sup>403</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 617:1.

<sup>404</sup> *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 39:18.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*