

# The Right Path to Health

*Health Education through Religion*

## Water and Sanitation in Islam

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*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

## **Foreword**

Hussein A. Gezairy, MD FRCS  
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Eastern Mediterranean Region of  
the World Health Organization

This year, the WHO reached its fortieth year; long may it continue.

This kind of occasion calls for a moment of reflection to review what has been achieved. WHO is proud of the successes it has achieved through its many complementary programmes and is making steady progress towards the attainment of the common goal of health for all.

WHO is particularly proud of the emerging common action, in which everyone is involved, in favour of promotion and protection of health. Health is indisputably the responsibility of both individuals and of society. Individuals, regardless of position or occupation have a fundamental role to play in health. Health is not the sole preserve of physicians or health authorities; everyone must participate in attaining health for all, in fulfilment of the Quranic injunction "Cooperate with each other for righteousness and piety, not for wrongdoing and enmity". Housewives, farmers, factory workers, teachers, soldiers, indeed everyone, young or old, can work for health or against it. Moreover, the role of individuals does not stop at the protection of their own health through healthy behaviour, such as maintaining cleanliness, observing a sensible diet and taking regular exercise, but extends to avoidance of those things that are harmful to health, both one's own health and that of others.

It is universally accepted that the exercise of one's human rights should not infringe on the rights of others. Anyone who unjustly kills another threatens the rights of everyone because, as the Quran states, "it is the same as killing everyone". The same is true for those who pollute the water supply,

damage the environment or neglect to immunize their children, since these contribute to spreading and increasing disease and thereby threaten everyone's right to a healthy life.

Religion has a strong influence in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Many of the principles of Islam call upon people to look after their health, to avoid health hazards and risks and to raise their standards of hygiene. The Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the World Health Organization sought the opinions of a number of eminent Muslim scholars to outline the Islamic rulings on a number of health-related matters. The subject of water and sanitation figures prominently among these, since it has far-reaching effects on personal and community health alike.

At the request of the Regional Office, Professor Abdul Fattah al-Husseini al-Sheikh, the Rector of Al-Azhar University, wrote a study on water and sanitation in Islam to which Dr Muhammad Haitham al-Khayyat, Director of Health Protection and Promotion at the Regional Office, added the health elements in order to make the study more comprehensive and of wider benefit.

It is hoped that readers will make use of the rulings they read in this book, try to make the best use of water and avoid any action that may cause pollution and harm to themselves, their families and communities. In this way they will implement the divine directive: "Believers, respond positively to God and His messenger when He calls you to what gives you life."



Muharram 1409  
August 1988

## Terms used in the Health Education through Religion series

The following notes are intended for readers who do not know Arabic and who do not have an Islamic background.

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>fatwa</i>           | A formal religious legal opinion.  |
| <i>fiqh</i>            | Islamic jurisprudence (literally: understanding and acquisition of knowledge).   |
| <i>haram</i>           | Prohibited, banned, illegal, impermissible, from a religious standpoint. Epithet applied, in general, to actions or things considered sinful for Muslims.  |
| <i>hijra</i>           | The emigration of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ from Mecca to Medina in AD 622. The event is used as the starting point for the Islamic Calendar.   |
| <i>Prophet</i>         | The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger of God. Any reference to the Prophet is usually followed by the phrase ﷺ “Peace be upon him”.  |
| <i>Quran</i>           | The Holy Book of Islam; the highest and most authentic authority in Islam. Quotations from the Quran are normally followed by a reference to the number of the chapter ( <i>sura</i> ) and the number of the quoted verse ( <i>aya</i> ). All Quranic texts in this publication are printed in italic. |
| <i>schools of fiqh</i> | The schools of Islamic thought or jurisprudence, the four most important of which were founded by Malik, Abu Hanifa, Al-Shafie and Ahmad ibn Hanbal.   |
| <i>sharia</i>          | The body of Islamic law based on the Quran and the <i>sunna</i> (see below).   |
| <i>sunna</i>           | Practices undertaken or approved by the Prophet and established as legally binding precedents.   |

## 1. Introduction

Water is one of the most essential needs for life. Without it man cannot survive for more than a few days. God has made every living thing dependent on water for its very existence. It constitutes two-thirds of body cell matter and 90% of all body fluids, including the blood as well as the lymphatic and spinal fluids. It is necessary for all biological processes, which have no place without the body. Furthermore, it contributes to the regulation of body temperature through perspiration.

Every day, the body excretes two to three litres of water: 1.4 litres through the kidneys, about 0.8 of a litre through the skin, 0.8 of a litre through the lungs and a very small amount through the intestines. This loss is compensated for by the fluid intake in food and drink.

Water is also essential for ablution, bathing and personal cleanliness: *It is He who sends down water upon you from heaven with which to purify you (8:11)*. Water is also necessary for the cleaning of one's home and personal effects, as well as for general hygiene. It is indispensable to agriculture and industry: *He it is who sends down water from the sky. With it, We bring forth plants of every kind (6:99)*.

All the fresh water we find on earth is of salty origin, as it comes from sea water, which covers three-quarters of the surface of the earth. From this salt water, God distills the fresh water required by humans, animals and plants by means of an absolutely unique mechanism. Heated by the blazing rays of the sun, water evaporates and the vapour is carried by the winds through the atmosphere, where it is condensed into clouds in the cool upper atmosphere. Winds then carry the clouds to wherever God wishes rain to fall. Streams and rivers then flow bringing fertility and bloom to the land. Part of the water evaporates, another part seeps away into the soil and the rest returns to the sea. From the sea, up to the air and back to earth, water passes through a continuous, preordained cycle on which life on earth depends. It goes on without interruption and ends only by the will of God at whose divine command it started. *God it is who sends the winds with which to blow the clouds along. We drive them on to a dead land and revive the earth by means of them after it has been dead. Such is the resurrection (35:9)*. *Surely in the creation of Heaven and Earth and the alternation of night and day, and in the ships which plough the sea carrying what is of benefit to mankind, and in the water which God sends down from the sky with which to revive the earth after*

*it has been dead and to scatter every kind of animal throughout it, and in directing the winds and clods which are driven along between the sky and the earth, there are signs for people who use their reason (2:164).*

There are three types of fresh water: atmospheric, surface and deep or underground water.

The term "atmospheric water" covers all that falls on earth in the form of rain, hail and the like. Having been distilled, it enjoys a high standard of purity: *We have sent down from the sky purifying water (25:48)*. However, it may, while falling, become mildy or extensively polluted by dust, gases and dirt carried in the air. This may happen particularly at the start of a rainfall or in the first fall of the season. Rainwater collected after the first fall and the first few minutes of each rainfall is completely pure, though poor in salts.

"Surface water" refers to water found on the surface of the earth which may be flowing, as in streams and rivers, or still, as in lakes. Running water sweeps away with it whatever substances it can carry, such as dead plants, pieces of plants and animals, dust and metal particles as well as germs: *He sends down water from the sky so that river valleys flow according to their measure. The current carries along a swelling scum (13:17)*. Hence, surface water is polluted, although it may become pure by one of the following processes: (1) sedimentation, in which the solid bodies and suspended particles settle to the bottom. This happens particularly if water runs for a long distance through barren land; (2) the effect of the sun and the air, both of which kill surface germs; (3) the biological action of some germs that break down organic substances and prevent the growth of other bacteria; (4) dilution as happens when a tributary that has run a long distance falls into a main river; (5) by means of some aquatic animals and water plants, like ducks, geese and fish which absorb some of the dirt found in the water and feed on it.

"Underground water" is water which has seeped down through porous soil: *We send down from the sky water in measure and We allow it to settle deep into the earth (23:18)*. This water, having penetrated through the soil, meets an impermeable layer, i.e. one through which it cannot pass. This may be of rock or clay. There it collects, constituting an underground water body. Such water may find for itself either an upward outlet by the side of a valley, gushing out in the form of a spring or fountain-head, or it may find a downward path, penetrating deeper below the first impermeable layer in the ground, until it reaches another, non-porous layer, over which it accumulates. This constitutes



deep underground water. The filtration of the water through the pores of the soil and rock increases its clarity and purity in different measures.

In either case, water may either flow freely out of the ground in the form of a fountain-head, or may be extracted by man through a well: *Do you not see how God sends down water from the sky and causes it to penetrate into the earth where it gathers into springs (39:21). There are some stones from which rivers gush out and there are others which split open and water comes out from them (2:74).*

Springs are of two types. A real spring is that where deep underground water gushes forth at the surface. Its water is of almost constant quantity and temperature and is not directly affected either by the amount of rain that falls over the basin from where it draws its water, or by the temperature of the surface of the earth. This is due to the fact that its water has collected deep in the ground, and the process of filtration through the ground is slow.

The other type of spring is directly affected by the amount of rainfall. It increases considerably in the rainy season and decreases, and slows down or even dries up in other seasons. Its temperature also varies according to season. Being close to the surface of the earth, water from this type of spring cannot safely be regarded as pure, since it may contain some impurities.

Wells are also of two types. Ordinary wells are bored into the earth until the underground water is reached. Water is extracted from such wells by buckets or by manual or electric pumps. There are also artesian wells, from which water flows upwards to the surface through internal pressure, due to the fact that the surface of the water is at a higher level, within a hill or mountain, than the mouth of the well.

## **2. Drinking-water**

Safe drinking-water is clear, colourless, odourless, of agreeable taste and of reasonable temperature. It contains only small amounts of minerals and a maximum of 0.15 g/litre of lime salts. It should be free of ammonia, nitrates, organic pollutants, and toxic substances such as lead salts and arsenic, as well as poisonous gases. It is totally free of parasites, ova and larvae, as well as disease-causing germs. It may contain no more than 100 non-pathogenic germs per one cubic centimetre.

Polluted water is that which contains inorganic chemicals, organic matter resulting from degeneration processes, or disease-causing germs or parasites. Polluted water is often turbid, with a particularly unpleasant odour and taste. However, water may remain colourless while containing a large number of pathogenic germs. These require special methods of detection.

Among the most important sources of rainwater pollution are the particles it collects from the air while falling, and the dirt in the containers in which it is collected. Surface water, likewise, becomes polluted by decayed substances, waste material or dirt that may be discharged into it. Underground water becomes polluted if dirt filters through and reaches the water from a nearby waste dumping site, latrine or the like.

### **Polluted water and the transmission of disease**

The diseases transmitted by contaminated water are numerous. Prominent among these are the diseases caused by germs or parasites found in the faeces and urine of sick persons, particularly typhoid, schistosomiasis and various kinds of helminthiasis.

*Typhoid-causing bacteria* infest man's intestines, blood and urine and are, therefore, likely to be transmitted to water if a sick person evacuates his bowels or urinates into it. In fact, before the adoption of modern methods of purification and control, water was one of the main pathways for the transmission and prevalence of typhoid. It remains so in developing countries.

*Schistosomiasis* is characterized by an inflammation of the bladder (demonstrated by haematuria) or the colon (demonstrated by dysentery). In the former, the ova of the parasite are excreted with the urine, and in the latter they are excreted with the faeces. When they reach water, particularly that with

little movement, larvae hatch and enter snails, where they develop into cercariae. These swim freely in the water until they come into contact with a person who may be bathing, swimming, washing clothes, drinking or wading in irrigation water. They penetrate the skin of that person with their front extremities, discarding their tails. In 24 hours the cercariae reach the blood and circulate in the blood-stream until they finally enter the liver. There they grow, reach adulthood and multiply. They then migrate to the walls of the bladder and the intestines where they produce ova.

This noxious cycle continues as long as urination and bowel evacuation are done in such a way that urine and faeces reach surface water, particularly where it is stagnant. The cycle can be broken by teaching people to refrain from such unsanitary practices, which are emphatically forbidden by Islam as will be shown later.

*Ancylostomiasis* is caused by worms which are found in the intestines and which inflict acute abdominal pain on the patient. Subsequently, severe anaemia is induced, causing the mucous membranes to become very pale, the face to swell and the legs to become oedematous. The patient may develop oedema, which causes liquids to accumulate in the tissues and body. If the case is not treated, it will certainly lead to chronic debility, and oedema will spread into all the patient's limbs. The patient becomes very lean and bony, yet retains an enlarged abdomen until death.

The ova of these worms are excreted with the faeces and, if they find damp soil, such as in fields, farms or mines, they hatch into larvae. When a person comes into contact with the larvae, they penetrate the skin and move inwards until they reach the blood and through the blood circulation reach the liver, the lungs and the intestines. Those who are most susceptible to infection are farmers and mine workers. However, larvae also attack children who wade barefoot in polluted mud. Obviously, prevention of the disease requires that no excreta be deposited on the ground, particularly in the shade, as shade maintains the dampness necessary for the survival of larvae, preventing the purifying effect of the sun from reaching them.

All the foregoing makes it absolutely clear that prevention of water pollution and the spread of the aforementioned diseases depend to great extent on two things: firstly, preventing the pathogenic germs which transmit these diseases and the parasites carrying them from being deposited in water or damp soil; and secondly, not exposing oneself to these germs and parasites by going through polluted water. Stagnant water represents the greatest risk in this connection.

These are exactly the same measures of control which the Prophet ﷺ mentions in a number of authentic statements, or *hadith*.

1. "Let no one of you urinate in stagnant water" (related by Ibn Majah).
2. "God's messenger has prohibited anyone from urinating where he bathes" (related by Abu Dawood).
3. "Do not urinate in stagnant, unrunning water, then use it for bathing." (related by Muslim).
4. "Let no one of you bathe in stagnant water to remove the state of ceremonial impurity" (related by Muslim).
5. "Guard against the two practices which invite people's curses". When the Prophet ﷺ was asked what these practices were he said: "Evacuating one's bowels by the roadside and in the shade" (related by Muslim).
6. "Guard against the three practices which invite people's curses: evacuating one's bowels near water sources, by the roadside and in the shade" (related by Abu Dawood).

From these pronouncements by the Prophet ﷺ, we learn that it is totally forbidden to urinate or defecate anywhere which is considered a source of water (*hadith 6*). This is particularly emphasized, in the first, third and fourth *hadith*, in the case of stagnant water, which, as we have learnt, is the best environment for the breeding of parasites. The Prophet's ﷺ pronouncements, particularly the second one, also forbid urination in water to be used for bathing. The Prophet's ﷺ statement is meant to arouse people's disgust at the unhealthy practice of urinating in water. It reminds us that we may use the same water at a later time for taking a bath or washing. Also, it is a preventive measure, which aims to protect other people against infectious diseases. Urination in stagnant water, including ponds and swimming pools, causes the spread of diseases.

The Prophet's ﷺ pronouncements also prohibit defecation in the shade. From the social point of view, this prohibition highlights the repugnance with which such a habit is held. It is in the shade that people rest, and they are prevented from doing so when they see that the place has been used as a toilet. As far as health protection is concerned, the prohibition is highly significant, because shady places do not receive enough sunshine to kill the germs which happen to be in their vicinity. It has already been mentioned that humidity, which is needed for the breeding of ancylostomiasis and various kinds of helminthiasis, lingers on in the shade.

The prohibition of urination and defecation in water may be extended to all water pollutants that may have an adverse effect on human health. These include the disposal of industrial effluent, dead animals, rubbish and waste, as well as the washing of contaminated clothes in rivers, canals and drains, and any action that pollutes the environment and endangers animals and plants. God commands us in the Quran: *Do not corrupt the earth after it has been set in order (7:85)*. He also denounces any person who, *whenever he holds a position of influence, goes about the earth spreading corruption and destroying crops and livestock. God does not leave corruption (2:205)*.

Islam's concern for maintaining the purity of water is clearly expressed by the following statement by the Prophet ﷺ: "Anyone who wakes up from sleep must not put his hand in any utensil until he has washed it three times; for he does not know where his hand was during his sleep" (related by Muslim).

The Prophet ﷺ also warns against leaving food and drink containers uncovered. Aisha, the Prophet's ﷺ wife, says: "I used to prepare for the Prophet ﷺ at night three covered water containers: one for his ablutions, another for brushing his teeth and the third for drinking". In another *hadith* related by Ibn Majah on the authority of Jabir, we are told that "the Prophet ﷺ has commanded us to tie up the mouths of our water skins and to cover our containers". The purpose of this is to prevent harmful insects from getting into food and drink, thereby transmitting disease-causing germs. This is a highly effective means of disease prevention.

### **3. Water and cleanliness**

The skin plays a very important part in the protection of the body and ensuring its safety. It also performs various other valuable functions with regard to the well-being, proper functioning and safety of the main organs of the body, such as the disposal of certain body wastes through respiration and the regulation of body temperature through vasodilation, sweating and evaporation. It is the skin which transmits the sense of touch to the brain so that we know the nature of the substance we touch and whether it is coarse or smooth, soft or hard, etc. The skin also transmits feelings of pain, heat, etc. Moreover, it is the cover which protects the human body against all polluting agents, insects and germs. It prevents their infiltration into the body where they may cause a variety of diseases.

It is most important, therefore, that the skin should be given continuous care, otherwise it becomes contaminated with dirt and other harmful substances, some of which comes from the environment, while others are discharged by the body itself in various forms, such as sweat and fat.

The general rule with regard to protecting one's skin, and consequently one's whole body, is maintaining cleanliness by taking a daily shower or bath, if possible, pouring water profusely over the whole body. When this is impractical, then at least those parts usually uncovered and often subject to contamination, such as one's hands and face, and the parts which, due to secretion, are liable to emit unpleasant odours, such as one's feet, must be thoroughly washed. If this is repeated several times a day, it will immensely benefit the whole body. Washing not only cleans the skin it also renders the whole body active. When any part of the body is washed, the blood circulation is strongly stimulated in that washed part and, by consequence, throughout the body. Moreover, we stimulate the central nervous system and all its component parts, reducing congestion there. This makes the entire body more active.

Islam attaches great importance to cleanliness. This is clearly apparent in Islamic legislation which makes ablution and bathing a duty. Islam also requires us to wash our hands before and after meals, and to wash our clothes to purify them. All these obligations are related to individual and collective acts of worship, emphasizing the Islamic concept which considers man's body and soul two parts of a single entity which are mutually complementary.

When we perform ablution we wash our faces, hands and arms, which are the parts exposed to dust and contamination. We also wash our feet which are liable to have unpleasant odours. God has made ablution an essential preliminary of prayers. He explains that: *God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure* (5:6). Maintaining the state of purity, through ablution, is also an essential condition for the validity of another act of worship, namely, *tawaf*, or walking round the Kaaba. God says in the Quran: *God loves those who turn to him in repentance, and He loves those who keep themselves pure* (2:222). He also says: *There are in it* (i.e. the Prophet's ﷺ mosque in Medina) *men who desire to maintain their purity; for God loves those who purify themselves* (9:109). Moreover, congregational prayers require that everyone maintains his cleanliness so that he does not cause others to turn away from attending the congregation. In short, Islam requires every Muslim to maintain a high standard of cleanliness and to remove from his body and clothes all dirt and impurity. This is summed up in the Prophet's ﷺ pronouncement: "Purification is one half of faith" (related by Muslim).

Ablution is a divine obligation to be undertaken by everyone who wishes to pray. God says in the Quran: *Believers, when you prepare for prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and wash your feet up to the ankles* (5:6). The Prophet ﷺ says: "God does not accept any prayers which have not been preceded by ablution" (related by Ibn Majah). Another version of this *hadith* which is also related by Ibn Majah states: "No prayers are accepted from one who has not performed ablution". The Prophet ﷺ also says: "Ablution is the opening of prayer" (related by Abu Dawood).

It is authentically reported that Othman, the third Caliph, called for water to be brought to him for his ablution. He poured water over his hands from his container and washed them three times. He then took water with his right hand from the container to rinse his mouth and nose. He then washed his feet three times, and his hands and arms to the elbows three times before wiping his head. He then washed each of his two feet three times. He then said: "I saw the Prophet ﷺ perform his ablution in this fashion" (related by Al-Bukhari).

Both the Quranic verse and the *hadith* require every Muslim who wants to offer his prayers to wash his face, arms and feet and to wipe his head. The *hadith* adds the cleaning of one's mouth by rinsing it and cleaning one's nose by taking in some water and blowing one's nose. In this fashion, all normally

uncovered parts of one's body, which are exposed to more contamination, are washed clean. This procedure may have to be repeated up to five times within every 24 hours, i.e. the same number as daily prayers, should one's ablution be invalidated before each prayer.

Islam places strong emphasis on the achievement of perfect harmony and total complementarity between spiritual and physical purification. Ablution, which represents physical purification, is an opening to prayers, which ensures spiritual purification. Together, they promote a complete state of psychological well-being for Muslims. There can be no conflict between the requirements of body and soul within him. Both complement each other, as can be clearly understood from the following statement by the Prophet ﷺ: "When a Muslim of God's servants makes his ablution and rinses his mouth, sins come out of it, and so do they come out of his nose when he rinses it. When he washes his face, sins drop from all of his face including from behind the edges of his eyelids. When he washes his hands, sins drop from all over his hands, including from under his fingernails. When he wipes his head, they drop from his head and from under his ears. When he finally washes his feet, sins drop from them to the extent that they go out from under his toenails" (related by Muslim).

Islam does not overlook the case of a Muslim whose ablution has not been invalidated. Such a person may need to perform ablution only one or twice every 24 hours. He is, therefore, encouraged to repeat his ablution in order to renew his state of cleanliness. According to a *hadith* related by Al-Tirmithi "the Prophet ﷺ used to perform ablution for every prayer". Although he has not made this obligatory to his followers he has encouraged them to do likewise. He says: "Only a believer maintains his state of purification by ablution"(related by Al-Darime). He also says: "A person who performs ablution even though he has not invalidated his earlier one receives from God the reward of ten good deeds" (related by Al-Tirmithi).

Muslims are further urged to perform their ablution for numerous purposes other than that of offering prayers. A person who is in a state of ceremonial impurity, i.e. *janaba*, is encouraged to perform ablution if he wants to eat or sleep. *Janaba* is the state of a person who has had sexual intercourse with his wife, or a person who has had an ejaculation, though he might not have had intercourse. This state of *janaba* requires taking a bath in which one washes the entire body. Nevertheless, Islam encourages a person in such a state to perform ablution if he delays having a bath. The Prophet ﷺ was asked whether a person in a state of ceremonial impurity may sleep, eat or drink. He answered: "Yes, if



he performs ablution in the same manner as when he wants to pray" (related by Ibn Majah). In this regard, the Prophet ﷺ sets an example for his followers. It is authentically reported by Muslim that the Prophet ﷺ "used to perform ablution in the same fashion as he did for prayer, if he wanted to sleep while being in a state of ceremonial impurity".

Islam also requires a man who has had sexual intercourse with his wife and wants to do so again to perform ablution in the interval. According to an authentic hadith: "If any of you has had intercourse with his wife, and wants to repeat it, he should perform ablution" (related by Muslim).

We are also recommended to perform ablution before we go to bed. According to a *hadith*: "If you want to go to bed, perform ablution as you do before prayer" (related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Ablution is further recommended when one is in a state of anger or has touched or carried a dead person, and before reciting the Quran or reading in the *hadith*, and for attending Islamic lessons, entering a mosque, calling for prayer, giving a sermon or visiting a graveyard.

The Prophet ﷺ commands us to perfect our ablution and do it well, in the sense that each part included by ablution is thoroughly cleaned. He says: "Perfect your ablution" (related by Abu Dawood). He also says: "To perfect one's ablution represents half of the faith" (related by Ibn Majah). "A man performed his ablution, leaving a spot as big as a nail on his foot without being washed. Seeing him, the Prophet ﷺ instructed him to go back and perfect his ablution" (related by Muslim).

From this we see that as soon as secretions, dust or dirt have appeared on one's body, ablution must follow to wash them away, rendering the body clean and the person pleasant to associate with. Ablution, thus, is the best guarantee for the cleanliness, vitality, purity and freshness of one's body.

## 4. Cleanliness

Performing local body cleanliness varies according to the part and organ to be cleaned. It can, therefore, be divided as follows:

1. *Hands*. Hands must be washed after touching any dirty or polluted object and also before every meal. It is related by Al-Nasa'i that the Prophet ﷺ "used to wash his hands whenever he wanted to eat". Hands should also be washed after meals, if necessary. The Prophet ﷺ says: "He who goes to sleep with his hands smelling of grease and suffers something evil in consequence shall have no one but himself to blame" (related by Al-Tirmithi). It is also authentically reported that the Prophet ﷺ, "having eaten of lamb shoulder, rinsed his mouth and washed his hands" (related by Ibn Majah).

Closely related to the cleanliness of hands is the need to clip one's nails to prevent the accumulation of dirt beneath them which may lead to some harm. The Prophet ﷺ says: "There are five things dictated by sound human nature: circumcision, removal of pubic hair, plucking of armpit hair, nail clipping, and moustache trimming" (related by Al-Nasa'i). The proper healthy method of clipping one's nails is to follow the shape of the nail, which means that only the part not connected to one's skin should be clipped. Moreover, it is more appropriate that toe nails should be clipped squarely so that the edges of the nail continue to cover the skin slightly, which prevents them penetrating into the skin.

During ablution it is also necessary to wash one's hands and feet thoroughly. The Prophet ﷺ says: "When you perform ablution, make sure that the water goes in between the fingers of your hands and your feet" (related by Al-Tirmithi).

2. *Feet*. It is very important to take good care of the cleanliness of one's feet on a daily basis. They must be washed thoroughly with plenty of water, making sure that no part of them is left unwashed, including the parts in between the toes. These are frequently liable to smell badly and to become a breeding area for harmful parasites. It is the need to maintain such meticulous and thorough cleanliness that Islam emphasizes. The Prophet ﷺ says: "Woe to the heels from the fire! Perfect your ablution" (related by Abu Dawood). He also says: "Perfect your ablution and wash in between your fingers" (related by Ibn Majah). God's messenger used to "rub in between his toes with his little finger when he performed ablution" (related by Abu Dawood).

3. Mouth. The most important part of this aspect of cleanliness is to wash one's mouth, or rinse it repeatedly. We have already said that rinsing one's mouth is part of ablution. The Prophet ﷺ says: "When you perform ablution, rinse your mouth" (related by Abu Dawood). It is also important to rinse one's mouth after every meal, and after using a toothpick to remove food particles trapped in between one's teeth. The Prophet ﷺ says: "Rinse your mouth after drinking milk, because it contains fat" (related by Abu Dawood). This implies that we should rinse our mouths after eating or drinking anything which contains fat. We have already quoted the hadith which states that the Prophet ﷺ rinsed his mouth after eating the meat of a shoulder of lamb. "He once went with some of his companions to Khaiber. When he asked for food to be served, only sawiq (which is made of flour) was brought in. They all ate and drank. He then called for some water to be brought in and he rinsed his mouth" (related by Ibn Majah).

Another important aspect of oral health is using *siwak* or a tooth brush. This is very important for the cleaning of teeth. *Siwak* generally means the cleaning of teeth by rubbing them with one's finger, or with a stick of wood similar to a brush and taken from a tree known as *arak*, or a special brush which must not be so hard as to cause gum bleeding or teeth scratching, or so soft as to be ineffective. It is also important that teeth cleaning should be done gently, slowly and thoroughly, so as to scrub off all the undesirable substances which get entangled between the teeth. It is best if tooth cleaning with *siwak* is carried out, however hurriedly, after every meal, and certainly before going to bed. It is also highly desirable that *siwak* be used upon rising, since the accumulation of saliva in one's mouth during sleep constitutes a suitable medium for the growth and multiplication of bacteria, especially if one sleeps with one's mouth open for long or short periods of time.

The great importance Islam attaches to oral cleanliness is evidenced by the strong recommendation to use a tooth stick or brush to remove anything which gets trapped between the teeth and any bad smell. This is particularly recommended before offering prayers, going to bed, upon waking, when feeling hungry or sensing an unpleasant change in the taste of one's mouth. It is further emphasized that teeth should be well brushed and one's mouth washed out before one attends Friday prayers, so as to remove any offensive odour. This is further extended so as to apply when one wishes to attend any gathering.

It has been reported that, addressing his followers, the Prophet ﷺ said: "Use *siwak* for it purifies the mouth and pleases the Lord. Whenever Gabriel came to me, he urged me to use the *siwak* to the extent that I thought that it would be made obligatory to me and to my followers. Had it not been for the fact that I fear to make things too difficult for my followers, I would have made it obligatory to them. As for me, I use the *siwak* so often that I sometimes fear to take off part of my gum" (related by Ibn Majah). The Prophet ﷺ also says: "Had it not been for fear of making things too difficult for my community, I would have commanded them to use the *siwak* before every prayer" (related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Another version of this *hadith* states: "Had it not been for fear of making things too difficult for my community, I would have commanded them to use the *siwak* every time they perform ablution" (related by Ibn Khuzaimah).

It is also related that "The first thing the Prophet ﷺ used to do upon entering his home was to brush his teeth" (related by Muslim). Likewise, "if he got up during the night, he would clean his mouth with the *siwak*" (related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). "When he prayed at night, he offered two *rak'a* at a time, and when he finished he brushed his teeth with the *siwak*" (related by Ibn Majah). "Whenever the Prophet ﷺ slept or had a nap at any time of day or night, he brushed his teeth on waking up, before he performed ablution" (related by Abu Dawood).

4. *Ears*. The most important part of ear cleaning is rubbing the external parts of one's ears with water and removing the wax which may accumulate in the hearing tract, leading to the membrane at the front of the middle ear. It is authentically reported that during ablution the Prophet ﷺ "rubbed his ears from the front and the back, putting his finger in the hearing tract" (related by Abu Dawood). It is also reported that he "rubbed his ears, using both forefingers on the inside and his thumbs on the back of his ears, thus cleaning them from inside and outside" (related by Ibn Majah).

5. *Eyes*. Cleaning one's face generally, by washing it with water alone or with soap and water should be sufficient to maintain eye cleanliness. Special care should be taken, however, of cleaning the corners of one's eyes, next to the nose, where secretion may accumulate. It is authentically reported that God's messenger used to "*rub the corners of his eyes*" to clean them (related by Ibn Majah).

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\* *Rak'a* is the unit of Islamic prayers. Each prayer is composed of 2, 3 or 4 *rak'a*.

6. *Nose*. Mucus may be removed from the nose by blowing it, provided that it is not done violently. One should rather blow one's nose gently, blocking one nostril and blowing the other alternately. One may follow that with washing the nose by lightly snuffing water in and blowing it out. The Prophet ﷺ says: "When any of you performs ablution, rinse your nostrils by drawing water into them then blowing it out" (related by Ibn Muslim). He also says: "Blow your nose well twice or three times" (related by Ibn Majah).

7. *Hair*. It is important to always ensure hair cleanliness particularly in the case of one whose skin is greasy. It should always take the form of removing greasy substances, dust and dirt that may accumulate on the scalp or hair. Hair should be combed to allow the air to penetrate through it, rendering both it and the scalp fresh and activating blood circulation to help one's hair grow and become healthy. Once a man came to the Prophet ﷺ with dishevelled hair and a matted beard. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Could not this man find something with which to arrange his hair?" (related by Ahmed). The Prophet ﷺ also says: "He who has hair should take good care of it" (related by Abu Dawood).

As for the rest of the body hair, some of it must be kept, such as that inside one's nostrils, or the hair covering the skin to protect the body against rubbing and scratching, as well as the hair of one's eyelides and eyebrows. However, the hair that appears after puberty in those places which are often subject to friction and touch, such as armpits, between thighs or in the region of the pubis should be shaved from time to time. As mentioned earlier, Islam regards these practices to be dictated by sound human nature. This means that the removal of such hair does not constitute changing God's creation. Indeed, to leave them without shaving for a long time is against human nature, because of the foul odour which they inevitably generate and the fungi they could help to grow.

8. *Anal and genital areas*. These areas may either be cleaned dry, using a stone, tissue paper or the like, to wipe the dirt away, or they may be washed thoroughly with water. It must be noted, however, that though cleaning the dry way, particularly with soft tissue paper, may achieve surface cleaning, it can never be sufficient, no matter how finely woven the paper particles may be. It can never completely absorb or remove all the substances clinging to the skin, penetrating its fine pores or remaining together with germs, beneath its numerous creases. Leaving even a little dirt is not safe, even when the dry way is used once. The risk is far greater if it is the normal practice. Hence, cleaning the dry way should only be resorted to in the absence of water, and provided that it is repeated several times to ensure removing all traces of faecal matter. The Prophet ﷺ has instructed his followers: "He who evacuates his bowels

should wipe the area three times". Cleaning the dry way is never as complete as that effected by the use of water. Anas reports: "Whenever the Prophet ﷺ evacuated his bowels, I used to bring him water with which to wash" (related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Aisha, the Prophet's ﷺ wife says: "I have never seen the Prophet ﷺ coming out after evacuating his bowels without having cleaned himself with water" (related by Ibn Majah). She spoke to Muslim women and said: "Tell your husbands to clean themselves with water, for I am too shy to tell them so. God's messenger ﷺ used to do that" (related by Al-Tirmithi).

Likewise, keeping female genitals clean and pure requires special care. They should be washed externally after every urination or defecation, taking care to avoid their contamination with any traces of urine or faecal matter. Moreover, following defecation, it is important to wash genitals before washing the anal area.

During menstruation, either a piece of clean cloth or sanitary napkin made of tissue paper, specially prepared for the purpose, should be used and changed once or more every day, as necessary. It is also important to wash genitals externally after every urination.

## 5. Bathing

To bathe is to immerse one's whole body in water or to pour water profusely over oneself, either to achieve general cleanliness or for curative purposes. Taking a bath is highly useful during menstruation for cleaning and removing unpleasant odours which may result from vaginal discharges on the one hand and the increase in perspiration on the other.

Taking a bath is considered obligatory in Islam on a number of occasions, including the end of menstruation and postnatal discharge, after sexual intercourse and wet dreams. In this connection, God says in the Quran: *If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, purify yourselves* (5:6). He also says: *Believers, do not come near to prayers when you are drunk until you are aware of what you are saying, nor when you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, except during travelling, until you have taken a bath* (4:43).

Aisha, the Prophet's ﷺ wife, was asked how the Prophet ﷺ washed himself to remove ceremonial impurity. She said "He used to pour water on his hands three times, then he would take water with his hand to wash his head three times before pouring water over all his body. He then used to go to prayers. As for us, (meaning women) we wash our heads five times because of our plaits" (related by Ibn Majah). She is also quoted to have said: "God's messenger ﷺ used to wash his hands when he had a bath to remove ceremonial impurity. He then performed ablution like he did for prayers, then he ran his fingers through his head until he made sure of cleaning the skin of his head, (meaning that he made sure that water penetrated into his scalp). He then took water with his cupped hand and poured it over his head three times before washing all his body" (related by Ibn al-Nasa'i). As for women's bathing, Umm Salama, one of the Prophet's ﷺ wives, said to him: "Messenger ﷺ of God, I arrange my hair in tight plaits. Should I undo them when I take a bath to remove ceremonial impurity?" He said: "It is sufficient for you to pour water with your cupped hand over your head three times before washing the rest of your body, and you are ceremonially purified" (related by Ibn Majah).

One cause of ceremonial impurity is to have a wet dream. This is an erotic dream during which a man may see himself having sexual intercourse. When he wakes up, he finds that he has had an emission of semen. The Prophet ﷺ was asked about a man who might find such traces without remembering having a wet dream. He said: "He should take a bath". He was also asked about a man who thinks that he has had a wet dream but cannot find any trace of

emission. The Prophet ﷺ said: "He need not have a bath". Umm Salama asked him: "Messenger of God, if a woman has such a dream, should she have a bath?" He answered: "Yes, women are but the sisters of men" (related by Al-Tirmithi). This last comment by the Prophet ﷺ in which he said that women are the sisters of men is construed as meaning that all Islamic teachings and rulings which are given in the masculine form apply to the feminine unless specifically stated otherwise.

It may happen, however, that someone may neglect to take a bath in the absence of causing unpleasant odours. To prevent such a situation, Islam requires its followers to take special care to keep themselves clean by taking a bath regularly, even in the absence of the above causes. A Muslim is instructed to take a bath before the weekly Friday prayer and for attending prayers on the two annual Islamic feasts. It is also recommended to bath frequently during the pilgrimage and the *umra* (mini-pilgrimage) and on such occasions as entering Mecca, prayer for rainfall (which takes place when there been no rain for sometime), when there is an eclipse, on regaining consciousness after fainting, after having washed the body of a dead person, when one feels that one's body odour is becoming unpleasant, before retiring to a mosque for meditation and prayer, when entering Medina and before attending any gathering.

The Prophet ﷺ is authentically reported to have said: "To take a bath on Friday is a duty of every pubescent Muslim, and he should also wear whatever perfume he may have" (related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim). He also says: "Anyone who intends to go to Friday prayer should take a bath first" (related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Ibn Majah). The Prophet ﷺ further says: "It is a duty owed to God by every Muslim to take a bath once every seven days, washing one's head and body" (related by Muslim).

These quotations from the Prophet ﷺ emphasize the importance of taking a bath on Friday in particular. It is described as a duty owed to God by every Muslim. Moreover, it is a gesture of respect to the mosque and all worshippers. Good Islamic manners require a Muslim not to go to Friday prayers when he has an unpleasant odour. He must change that by taking a bath and wearing some sweet scent. These statements by the Prophet ﷺ also highlight the importance of body cleanliness and taking a bath frequently. They put the minimum requirement at one bath a week.

The Prophet ﷺ, however, has told us to take a bath on every religious or social occasion. Cleanliness and self-purification are associated with worship on the one hand and with social activity on the other. The Prophet ﷺ is



authentically reported to have made a habit of "taking a bath on the day of the feast ending the fast and on the day of the feast of sacrifice" (related by Ibn Majah).

It is reported by Ibn Abbas that God's messenger "took a bath and put on his clothes. When he arrived at Thul-Hulaifa (one of the points where pilgrims must wear their consecration garments) he offered two *rak'a* of prayer before mounting his camel. when the camel rose up to start its journey, the Prophet ﷺ entered into the state of *ihram*, or consecration, for pilgrimage" (related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Nafi' reports that "Abdullah ibn Umar, a learned companion of the Prophet, ﷺ used to stop chanting the words of *talbiya* (words repeated by pilgrims on their journey towards Mecca, declaring that they are travelling in response to God's invitation) shortly after entering the boundaries of the *haram* area. He spent the night at Thu-Tuwa. In the morning, he offered dawn prayers before taking a bath. He instructed people that such was the practice followed by the Prophet ﷺ" (related by Al-Bukhari).

Abu Huraira, a companion of the Prophet ﷺ, quotes him as saying: "Whoever washes the body of a dead person should take a bath " (related by Ibn Majah and Al-Tirmithi).

