

LIST OF MINOR AILMENTS AND CONDITIONS PART 2

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

IMPORTANT NOTE: The following list applies only to older children and adults and is limited to medical ailments and conditions which are clearly and unquestionably non-life-threatening. The Halachah is abundantly clear that all Shabbos restrictions are lifted if even a small chance of a life-threatening situation exists. If one is aware of a medical condition, it is imperative that before Shabbos he consult a rabbi, a doctor or any other medically knowledgeable person for a diagnosis of his condition and instructions for treating it on Shabbos. If this was not done, and now on Shabbos there is even a slight chance of a life-threatening situation, all Shabbos restrictions are lifted.

This list also excludes medications for mental and behavioral disorders, e.g., Ritalin, Prozac, etc. Each individual situation should be presented to a rabbi for a decision.

1. abscess-may be squeezed to relieve pressure from pus, even if some blood is secreted in the process[1].
2. acne-all medications are prohibited. See infection.
3. angina-all medications are permitted.
4. Arthritis (mild)-Anti-inflammatory medication may not be taken.
5. asthma (mild)-all oral and breathing medications may be taken[2].
6. athlete's foot-all medications are prohibited.
7. back or neck brace-may be put on or removed[3].
8. bedridden[4] due to pain-all oral medications may be taken.
9. bee or wasp sting-the stinger may be removed and the area may be washed with ice water, lemon juice or vinegar, etc. The area may not be soaked, however, in those liquids[5].
10. bleeding (slow)-pressure may be applied to a cut to stop bleeding. Sucking or squeezing out blood is prohibited[6].
11. blood pressure-all medications are permitted.
12. bone fracture (simple)-a non-Jew may be asked to do anything necessary, e.g., make a phone call, drive a car, take x-rays or put on a cast. [If a non-Jew is not available, some poskim permit a Jew to do these acts if they are done with a shinui, in an abnormal manner[7].] If there is even a small chance of internal bleeding, e.g., the thigh or pelvis bone was fractured, or if the elbow was shattered, all Shabbos restrictions are lifted.
13. Cellulites - may be life-threatening and immediate medical attention is required.
14. cold (running nose)-medications and vitamins may not be taken[8], unless one is experiencing discomfort in his whole body or is bedridden. Chicken soup and tea with honey, etc. are permitted.

15. cough-medication may not be taken. If the cough may be an indication of pneumonia or asthma, medication is permitted.
16. cuts and abrasions (minor wounds)-may be washed or soaked in water. Hydrogen peroxide may be poured over a cut. It is not permitted, however, to soak absorbent cotton or paper in such a solution and then wash the wound with it. The wound may be covered with a non-medicated Band-Aid[9]. See infection.
17. diabetes-all necessary medications may be taken.
18. diarrhea-medication is not permitted unless one is in severe pain or weak all over. Prune juice or any other food or drink is permitted. A hot water bottle is permitted when one experiences strong pains[10].
19. dried (or cracked) lips-it is prohibited to apply chap stick or any other medication, liquid or otherwise.
20. dried (or chapped) hands-it is prohibited to rub them with either oil, ointment (Vaseline) or lotion. One who regularly uses a pourable, liquid lotion or oil on his hands (whether they are chapped or not) may do so on Shabbos, too, even if his hands are chapped[11].
21. ear infection-all medications are permitted. Cotton balls may be inserted[12]. Even if the infection is no longer present, prescribed medicine begun on a weekday must be continued until finished in order to avoid a relapse.
22. eye inflammation-eye drops (or ointment) may be instilled in the eye. If the eye is not inflamed but merely irritated, no medication is permitted[13].
23. fever-all oral medications may be taken. A mercury thermometer may be used[14]. If a person is suffering from high-grade fever, a non-Jew may be asked to do whatever the patient needs in order to feel better[15]. If the cause of the fever is unknown, a doctor should be consulted.
24. headache-medication should not be taken. If the headache is severe enough so that one feels weak all over or is forced to go to bed, medication may be taken. One who is unsure if he has reached that stage of illness may be lenient and take pain- relieving medication[16].
25. heartburn-Foods which will have a soothing effect may be eaten. Some poskim permit taking anti-acid medication while others are stringent. If the medicine is prescribed by a doctor, one may be lenient[17].
26. Hemorrhoids-For a mild case, medication may not be taken. For a severe case, it is permitted to sit in a "sitz bath" (with water that heated before Shabbos), or use medicated pads or suppositories.
27. Herniated Disc (back and leg pain) - ice packs or hot packs are permitted. Physical therapy exercises, e.g. stretching, are permitted. If the pain is severe to the degree that the entire body is in pain, painkillers or other medications are permitted as well.
28. infection-all medications are permitted. If ointment is needed, it may be used. See Using Ointment on Shabbos in next week's article for the permitted application method.
29. insect repellent-liquid or spray repellents may be used[18].

1. O.C. 328:28 and Mishnah Berurah 89.

2. See The Journal of Halachah and Contemporary Society #6, pg. 47, for a full discussion of how to treat asthma on Shabbos. See also Igros Moshe, Y.D. 4:13-2 and Tzitz Eliezer 17:13.
3. Based on ruling of Rav S.Z. Auerbach in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34, note 113.
4. Even if he is capable of getting out of bed and walking around, but presently he is in bed due to his pain, he is considered bedridden; Aruch ha-Shulchan 328:19.
5. See Mishnah Berurah 328:141,142. Obviously, if the sting results in a severe allergic reaction, it is considered a life-threatening situation and one must do whatever is necessary as rapidly as possible.
6. Mishnah Berurah 328:147.
7. This is the view of Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 328:19 and Eglei Tal (Tochen 18). Some poskim (Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 33, note 18; Shevet ha-Levi 8:93) rule that one may rely on this view, especially when there is "danger to a limb." Note, however, that Mishnah Berurah, Aruch ha-Shulchan and most poskim do not agree with this leniency.
8. There is room for leniency in kavod ha-beriyos situations, e.g., a constantly dripping nose which is disturbing to people who are around him; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34, note 52).
9. Most poskim (oral ruling by Rav M. Feinstein, quoted in Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos 44, note 117); Rav S.Z. Auerbach in Shulchan Shlomo 328:45; Ohr l'Tzidon 2:36-15; Az Nidberu 7:34, 35; Rav C.P. Scheinberg, quoted in Children in Halachah, pg. 88; Rav N. Karelitz, quoted in Orchos Shabbos 11:35) permit removing the protective tabs from a Band-Aid, while others (Minchas Yitzchak 5:39-2; 9:41; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Machazeh Eliyahu 70) are stringent. To satisfy all opinions, one may prepare Band-Aids for Shabbos use by peeling off their protective tabs and re-sealing them before Shabbos; once they have been prepared in this fashion, they may be used on Shabbos (Tzitz Eliezer 16:6-5).
10. Mishnah Berurah 326:19.
11. Based on O.C. 327:1.
12. It is prohibited to tear cotton balling on Shabbos; Minchas Yitzchak 4:45; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 35:20.
13. O.C. 328:20. See also Eglei Tal (Tochen 17).
14. O.C. 306:7. Before using it, the mercury may be shaken down.
15. Mishnah Berurah 328:46, 47.
16. See Ketzos ha-Shulchan 138, pg. 100; Minchas Yitzchak 3:35; Be'er Moshe 1:33; 2:32.

17. See Ketzos ha-Shulchan 138, pg. 98; Tzitz Eliezer 8:15 (15-21); Az Nidberu 1:31; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 34:4.

18. Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 14:35; Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 179.

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