

Not So Fast: Do Pregnant, Laboring, or Postpartum Women Eat on Yom Kippur?

By the *poskim* of the Bais HaVaad Medical Halacha Center
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PREGNANCY AND LABOR

These guidelines are for women with no health issues and no history of adverse health effects from fasting. A woman with such issues, or a woman expecting multiples, must consult a Rav.

- A pregnant woman should properly hydrate in the period before the fast, preferably for three days.
- While *tefilah* is always important, and on Yom Kippur all the more so, fasting on Yom Kippur is a greater obligation than davening. If she feels weak, she may even daven *Shemoneh Esrei* and say *Viduy* lying down.
- If a woman feels faint or dizzy or has four contractions in under an hour, she should drink one fluid ounce, wait four minutes, drink another ounce, and continue this cycle for 20 minutes.
- If the symptoms persist, she should drink normally—without regard to quantity—until they subside.
- If the contractions don't stop, she should go to the hospital. On the way to the hospital she may eat as much as she feels is necessary to have strength for the delivery.
- Once active labor begins, she may eat and drink with no limitations.
- After *tzeis hakochavim* at the conclusion of the fast, before davening *Ma'ariv*, she may say "*Baruch hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol*" (without Hashem's name) and drink liberal quantities of water. (It is permitted to drink water before)
- A Rav and a doctor should be consulted if anything occurs that seems out of the ordinary.

These guidelines apply through week 36. During weeks 37 and 38, consult your doctor and then your Rav. After 38 weeks, there is no increased danger in childbirth, so one should fast normally.

POSTPARTUM

- If a woman gave birth by the end of 2 Tishrei (the second day of Rosh Hashanah): Fast normally. If there are nursing difficulties, consult a Rav.
- If she gave birth on 3 Tishrei: Until the hour that the birth occurred, eat and drink "*shiurim*" (see below). From the hour that she gave birth, fast normally. For example, if the birth occurred at noon on the third of Tishrei, she may eat and drink *shiurim* on Yom Kippur until noon and fast normally thereafter.
- If she gave birth from 4 Tishrei until 6 Tishrei: Eat and drink *shiurim*.
- If she gave birth on 7 Tishrei: Until the hour that the birth occurred, she may eat and drink normally. For example, if she gave birth at 10 AM, she may eat and drink normally until ten o'clock on Yom Kippur morning. After that hour, she should eat and drink *shiurim*.
- If she gave birth on 8 or 9 Tishrei: Eat and drink normally.
If there are any complications after birth, such as anemia, fainting, or heavy

bleeding, or if the woman underwent a particularly long or complicated caesarean, a doctor and a Rav should be consulted.

**IF ONE MUST DRINK ON YOM KIPPUR: HOW TO DRINK
“SHIURIM”**

This is not a medical document and should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a doctor and/or a Rav with expertise in these matters. In any questionable situation, one must consult a doctor and a Rav.

Eating* and drinking *shiurim* (maximum quantities) requires careful attention. Those who are required to drink on Yom Kippur should consult a doctor as to how much liquid they need to consume, taking into consideration how much they will drink before and immediately after the fast. Generally, drinking one liter is sufficient.

- It is advisable to drink liquids that contain calories, such as soft drinks or milk.
- The liquid should be divided into portions of one fluid ounce each.
- One should prepare an appropriate-size cup before Yom Kippur.
- One should wait nine minutes between portions. If this does not provide a sufficient fluid intake, one may wait four minutes between portions.
- It is advisable to prepare all required fluids in advance and drink the prepared cups over the course of the day. For example, if the required amount is one liter, have a liter of the desired drink ready.

* Those who must **eat** *shiurim* should call the Bais HaVaad Medical Halacha Hotline (732.276.2183) or consult a Rav for guidance.