

SHABBAT: MEDICINES

INTRODUCTION TO SHABBAT AND MEDICINES

Introduction to Shabbat and Medicines

Health or Life-Threatening Condition

On *Shabbat*, you may not take medicine used to promote health. Whenever there is any question of a life-threatening disease or condition, you must take medicine.

Categories of Sick People

There are several categories of sick people:

- **Entire Body Is Affected**

EXAMPLE Fever.

STATUS You may take medicines for this category; pills, such as aspirin, are OK to take.

EXCEPTION You may not smear substances on skin UNLESS the fever is life-threatening, in which case even smearing is permitted.

- **Only Part of the Body Is Affected**

STATUS Some medicines may be used--consult a *rabbi*.

- **Discomfort**

STATUS Medicine generally may not be used.

SHABBAT: CREAMS AND OILS

Shabbat: Squeezing, Dabbing, and Smearing Medicinal Creams

You may squeeze a tube of cream on *Shabbat*, but you might not be able to use the cream on *Shabbat* for other reasons—consult a *rabbi*.

NOTE Smearing creams or ointments is permitted only in life-threatening situations. Otherwise, you may not smear cream on skin on *Shabbat* (or a *Jewish festival*) even using a *shinu'i* such as using the back of your hand or a toe.

Dabbing is permitted, but only when you are permitted to use medicine for that purpose.

EXAMPLE You may dab cream on *Shabbat* for a bee sting.

REASON The pain from the sting will affect the entire body.

EXAMPLE You may not use cream for a mosquito bite.

REASON It is only a local irritation.

NOTE You may not smear cream for either condition.

Shabbat: Massage Oils

You may rub olive oil, almond oil, and other massage oils onto your skin for the purpose of massage, but you may not use such oils for moisturizing rough or dry skin.

REASON Moisturizing rough or dry skin is a type of healing/*refu'a*.

SHABBAT: MEDICINE

Shabbat: Medicine for Chronic Diseases

You may take medicine on *Shabbat* for chronic diseases such as high blood pressure.

Shabbat: Medicine for Non-Chronic Diseases

You may take medicine on Shabbat for non-chronic illnesses, if skipping one day will prevent cure, but not if skipping a day will just delay your cure.

EXCEPTION If the disease affects your entire body, you may take the medicine anyway.

SHABBAT: PAINKILLERS

When You May Take a Painkiller on Shabbat

You may take a painkiller on Shabbat if the pain affects the entire body or if the pain keeps you awake.

NOTE This also becomes the criterion for whether to take the pain killer during the daytime: if the pain you feel during the day would keep you awake if you were trying to sleep.