



# Guidelines for the Ill on Pesach

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*Guide to Traditional Jewish Observance  
in a Hospital*  
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## G. Passover

Passover is one of the most widely observed Jewish holidays. This eight-day springtime festival commemorates the exodus of the Jewish slaves from Egypt and their subsequent freedom. During Passover, no bread or other products of grain fermentation may be eaten or even owned by a traditionally observant Jew. Sabbath-like festival restrictions are observed on the first two and last two days of the holiday.

“*Chametz*” is any food product made from wheat, barley, rye, oats, spelt, or their derivatives, which has leavened (risen) and/or which has come into contact with water for more than 18 minutes.

“*Kitniyot*,” sometimes referred to generically as “legumes,” include rice, corn, soy beans, string beans, peas, lentils, mustard, sesame seeds and poppy seeds. Even though *kitniyot* cannot technically become *Chametz*, Ashkenazi Jews do not eat them on Passover.

### Searching for & Selling *Chametz*

1. The owner of a space, or tenant if the premises are rented, is required to search for *Chametz* on the night of the fourteenth of *Nissan*.<sup>444</sup> One who is unable to be at home at this time may appoint a representative to do the search for them.<sup>445</sup>
2. If one does not have anybody available to do the search for them, and they will be leaving their home before the fourteenth (but within thirty days of Passover), then they must do the search and nullification of *Chametz* the night before they leave their house, without reciting the blessing.<sup>446</sup>
3. One is not required to do a “*Bedikat Chametz*” (search for leavened products) in their hospital room since they do not own it, but they should check all of their possessions to make sure that they do not have any *Chametz* amongst their belongings, and one should also check any areas designated for the patients’ personal use, such as closets, the night table, and drawers. A blessing would not be made on this search.<sup>447</sup>
4. A person can do “*Bittul Chametz*” (nullification of leavened products) in their hospital room, and make a statement to the effect that they do not intend to automatically acquire any *Chametz* that might be in their hospital room. If they find *Chametz* in the room over Passover, they can assume it is abandoned. If they would like to avoid inadvertent consumption, they can cover it on the holiday, or destroy it on *Chol Hamoed*.<sup>448</sup>

<sup>444</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 437:1.

<sup>445</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 432:2 & *Mishnah Berurah* 8, 11; *Shulchan Aruch OH* 436:1. This representative is ideally an adult male, but may also be a woman or a responsible child, *Mishnah Berurah* 436:1, 437:18-19.

<sup>446</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 436:1.

<sup>447</sup> *Torat Hayoledet* 46:1 (2nd ed.); *Piskei Teshuvot* vol. 5, pg. 20.

<sup>448</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 446:1, *Mishnah Berurah* 435:5.

## Seder

- 1a. One who is unable to have an entire *Seder* on Passover night or is busy taking care of a patient who is dangerously ill, should at least:
  - Recite *Kiddush* and try to drink minimally 86 grams (3.03 ounces) of the cup while reclining.
  - Then recite the “*Avadim Hayinu*” (“we were slaves”) section of the *Haggadah*, since it encompasses the primary obligation of telling the story of the Exodus. If one has a little more time it is ideal to recite the “*Rabban Gamliel Haya Omer*” (“*Rabban Gamliel* used to say”) section as well.
  - Then drink a second cup while reclining after saying the blessing of “*Asher Ga’alnu*.”
  - Then wash their hands and make the blessing of “*Al Netillat Yadayim*.”
  - Then take three *Matzot* (two will suffice if they don’t have three), say the blessings of “*Hamotzi*” and “*Al Achilat Matzah*” and eat about 17- 20 grams (0.6 - 0.7 oz.) within about 4-5 minutes, while reclining.
  - If more time is available, one should eat some *Maror* after reciting the appropriate blessing, without reclining.
  - At this point one may eat their meal and then the second *Matzah* for *Afikoman*, followed by the grace after meals, the blessing for the third cup and the blessing said after drinking the cup.<sup>449</sup>
- 1b. If one would not have time to eat *Matzah* twice, before the meal and again for *Afikoman*, they should:
  - Eat their entire meal without *Matzah*.
  - At the end of the meal wash their hands without saying the blessing of “*Al Netillat Yadayim*.”
  - Say the blessings of “*Hamotzi*” and “*Al Achilat Matzah*” and then eat the *Matzah* while reclining for the sake of both the *Mitzvah* of *Matzah* and the *Mitzvah* of *Afikoman*.
  - One should then say the grace after meals and if possible, drink another cup and make the blessing after that.<sup>450</sup>
- 1c. If one has the strength to continue before midnight, they should drink the third cup (if they have not yet done so) with its appropriate blessing, say *Hallel* and then drink the fourth cup while reclining, and conclude with the blessing after drinking wine/grape juice. If possible, one should say the prayers of “*Nishmat*” and “*Yishtabach*,” as well as whatever else they had to skip in the *Haggadah*.<sup>451</sup>
2. One who may become busy taking care of a patient or for some reason does not think that they will be able to do the entire *Seder* at once, should make a condition from the outset that when they eat the *Matzah*, if they are interrupted and unable

<sup>449</sup> *Lev Avraham* 20:1(1).

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, 20:1(2).

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, 20:1 (3-4).

to return to their *Seder*, then the *Matzah* that they are eating now should also be counted as fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of *Afikomen*. But if they are able to return to the *Seder* before midnight, then the *Matzah* which they already ate should be considered a fulfillment of the *Mitzvah* of *Matzah*, and the *Matzah* they eat at the end of the meal (before midnight) will be to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Afikomen*. If they diverted their attention from the meal during the break, they will have to wash their hands and make “*Hamotzi*” again.

- 3a. If one is needed to care for a dangerously ill patient, they must do so and forgo their performance of the *Seder*.<sup>452</sup> If one was unable to perform the *Seder* until after midnight, they may still do all of the *Mitzvot* of the night, but since it is questionable whether they are actually fulfilling the *Mitzvot* at this time, they do not say the blessings of “*Al Achilat Matzah*” or “*Al Achilat Maror*” on the *Maror*. In this case one should drink all four cups, but only say the blessings on the first and third cups.<sup>453</sup>
- 3b. If one was unable to do any of this and the entire night passes without having performed the *Seder*, it cannot be made up or performed at another time.<sup>454</sup>

## **Wine, *Maror* & *Matzah***

- 4a. Although the “four cups” during the *Seder* are ideally fulfilled by drinking wine,<sup>455</sup> one may use grape juice<sup>456</sup> or another suitable beverage,<sup>457</sup> such as tea, coffee or juice if they are unable to drink wine or grape juice.<sup>458</sup>
- 4b. One who is responsible for tending to a patient should not drink wine so that their concentration is not hampered.<sup>459</sup>
5. One who is ill or very picky may choose any of the acceptable options for *Maror* that they prefer, such as romaine lettuce rather than horseradish, and may eat it little by little over the course of a few minutes. Even if they don’t like *Maror*, they should try their best to eat it. However, if it would be damaging to their health, they should try to simply eat a tiny bit or at least chew some in their mouth to get a taste of the bitterness (though in this case they would not make the blessing).<sup>460</sup>
6. One who has difficulty chewing, swallowing or digesting *Matzah* in its normal state, may crush it into small pieces and eat it this way at the *Seder*. If eating it dry is too difficult, one may soften the *Matzah* by dipping it into water, or when absolutely necessary, in another beverage (but one must make sure that the

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<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 20:1.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, 20:1(7). See also R. Asher Weiss, *Responsa Minchat Asher* 3:36, on the priorities for one who is unable to complete an entire *Seder*. R. Weiss suggests that the order of preference is for one to at least have *Matzah*, then if there is enough time, to at least do the following in order of priorities: 1. *Kiddish*, then 2. *Marror*, 3. *Birkat Hamazon* with a cup, 4. *Afikomen*, 5. the remaining two cups, 6. *Korech* with the “*Motzi matzah*.” Regarding reciting the *Haggadah*, he suggests at least to say “*Mah Nishtanah* and *Avadim Hayinu*,” then “*Kol Shelo Amar Gimel Devarim...*” and then the rest of the *Haggadah* as time permits.

<sup>454</sup> *Magen Avraham OH* 485:1; *Shaarei Teshuvah* 482 intro.

<sup>455</sup> *Shulchan Aruch OH* 472:10.

<sup>456</sup> *Lev Avraham* 20:1(1) fn. 2 & 20:5.

<sup>457</sup> *Mishnah Berurah* 472:37.

<sup>458</sup> *Guide for the Jewish Hospital Patient*, 35.

<sup>459</sup> *Lev Avraham* 20:1(1) fn. 2.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, 20:2 based on *Mishnah Berurah* 473:43.

*Matzah* does not disintegrate and liquefy).<sup>461</sup>

7. If one vomits after eating *Matzah*, *Maror*, or drinking one of the cups, since they have already swallowed it they have fulfilled the *Mitzvah* and do not need to eat or drink again. However, if one has regurgitated all the *Matzah* that they ate, they will be unable to recite the grace after meals.<sup>462</sup>
8. If drinking the cups, or eating *Matzah* or *Maror* will cause a patient to have internal illness or the need to lie down, they are exempt from the *Mitzvah* and should not do so.<sup>463</sup>
9. One who is fed through a PEG or NG tube will be unable to fulfill these *Mitzvot*, but if possible they may listen to someone else make the appropriate blessings and have in mind to fulfill the *Mitzvot* in this manner.<sup>464</sup>
10. One who has celiac disease and cannot eat gluten or any wheat may not eat *Matzah* if they know it will lead to illness, but should instead eat oat *Matzah* if possible. However, if this person does occasionally eat bread during the year, they should then have a *Seder* without *Matzah*, but at the end wash their hands without reciting a blessing, then say the blessings of “*Hamotzi*” and “*Al Achilat Matzah*” and then eat the minimum amount of *Matzah* (as described in paragraph 1a above) while reclining, for the sake of both the *Mitzvah* of *Matzah* and the *Mitzvah* of *Afikoman*.<sup>465</sup>
11. If one is unable to recline, they are not obligated to do so.<sup>466</sup>
12. One who is unable to eat the proper amount of *Matzah* or *Maror* within the minimum time (discussed above) should eat it without reciting the appropriate blessing.<sup>467</sup> If their doctor advises them not to eat *Matzah*, *Maror* or wine and they do so anyway, they have committed a transgression and not a *Mitzvah*.<sup>468</sup>

## ***Chametz & Kitniyot***

13. A patient who is not seriously ill may not take, or even have in their possession, any pleasant-tasting medicine such as lozenges or syrup, if they contain any *Chametz* at all.<sup>469</sup>
14. However, a non-seriously ill patient may swallow pills or capsules that are unpalatable, and may have them in their possession, even if they contain a *Chametz* ingredient.<sup>470</sup> (There are many Israeli-produced medicines that are certified Kosher for Passover.)

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 20:3 based on responsa *Binyan Tzion* 29 and *Mishnah Berurah* 461:18.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid., 20:4.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 20:6; *Mishnah Berurah* 472:35; *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 32 fn. 73; It should be pointed out that if one is not sick and one only dislikes or is mildly harmed by these substances, he or she must nevertheless consume them (*Shulchan Aruch OH* 472:10).

<sup>464</sup> *Lev Avraham* 20:7.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 20:9.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid., 20:10.

<sup>467</sup> *Guide for the Jewish Hospital Patient*, 35.

<sup>468</sup> *Nishmat Avraham OH* pg. 342 (8); *Maharam Shik OH* 260; *Minchat Yitzchak* 4:102(2).

<sup>469</sup> *Lev Avraham* 20:12.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid. Rav Yisroel Belsky ruled that non-chewable pills are not considered edible items and are therefore permitted to be taken as medication *Pesach*. However, this does not apply to vitamins and if there is an available substitute it is preferred to use one that is kosher for Passover if possible (*Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* LXXI, Spring 2016, “Kashrut Rulings by Rabbi Belsky, zt”l”, 54).

- 15a. A patient who is dangerously ill, or even just potentially so [see **pg. 15**, for an explanation of this concept], may eat or drink *Chametz* food if they are specifically required by the physician for one's healing, even if it is not certain that it will cure the patient, unless there is a non-*Chametz* alternative. One is obligated to consume *Chametz* if this is what their doctor has prescribed for the sake of saving their life.<sup>471</sup>
- 15b. Since medications containing *Chametz* may sometimes be taken on Passover when necessary, one should consult their physician and rabbi to discuss their case. For example, all medications for a heart condition, diabetes, abnormal blood pressure, stroke, kidney disease, lung disease, depression, epilepsy, the immune system (transplant anti-rejection), and cancer treatment (including precautionary) may be taken on Passover. Furthermore, all prescription medication taken on a regular basis for chronic conditions should only be changed with the consultation of one's physician (if one cannot reach his or her physician, they should continue to take their regular prescription and not change). Some examples of such chronic conditions include any psychiatric condition, prostate condition, Crohn's disease, colitis, high cholesterol, Parkinson's disease, anemia, multiple sclerosis, thyroid condition and asthma.<sup>472</sup>
16. Although *Ashkenazim* do not eat *Kitniyot* (rice, beans or any leguminous vegetables) on Passover, a non-seriously ill patient or a child suffering from a condition, such as diarrhea, whose doctor says they must eat one of these products, like rice or corn flour, may do so.<sup>473</sup>
17. Since most pills and capsules are made of starch or amyllum which are made of *Kitniyot*, but do not contain any *Chametz* (and even if they do contain *Chametz*, it is probably unpalatable), even a non-seriously ill patient may take them on Passover.<sup>474</sup> One should not be strict and discontinue necessary medication on Passover if they have been advised by a doctor to take it on Passover, particularly if there is any chance that discontinuing the medication may lead to any possible danger to the patient.<sup>475</sup>
18. Alcohol based hand sanitizers, such as Purell, typically contain ethyl alcohol, which may be *Chametz*. However, since it is inedible (like liquid soap) and the alcohol content is denatured, these products may be used on Passover.<sup>476</sup>
19. A patient, even if not dangerously ill, whose custom is not to eat *Gebrukts* (Matzah that has absorbed liquid) on Passover, may nevertheless eat it if they have nothing else available.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 20:11.

<sup>472</sup> Rabbi Gershon Bess, *A Passover Guide to Cosmetics and Medications*, Kolllel-Los Angeles 2011, Intro.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 20:13 based on *Mishnah Berurah* 453:7.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 20:14.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., based on *Mishnah Torah, Yesodei Hatorah* 5:8, *Shulchan Aruch YD* 155:3 & *Shach* 13, *Chazon Ish OH* 116:8, *Minchat Shlomo* 1:17, *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah* 40 fn. 169.

<sup>476</sup> Rabbi Dovid Cohen, *Sappirim* (Published by the CRC - Chicago Rabbinical Council), April 2008, Issue 12 pg. 4 in the name of Rav Gedalia Dov Schwartz.

<sup>477</sup> Personal communication with Dr. Abraham S. Abraham.



## Medicine on Passover (summary)<sup>478</sup>

A. A Patient who is (or may become) **seriously ill**:

- May eat or drink products containing *Chametz* if this is necessary to cure the patient, even if they will not certainly cure him or her, if one cannot easily obtain a *Chametz*-free alternative.
- Not only is this permissible, but it is obligatory since it can be categorized as life-saving.

B. A patient incapacitated but **not dangerously or seriously ill**:

We must distinguish between eating *Chametz* in the normal manner when the product has a good flavor (palatable) and those medications which are not eaten in the normal manner and provide no flavor. We also distinguish between products in which the *Chametz* itself gives a good flavor to the item, and those in which the flavor comes from non-*Chametz* sugar mixtures and the *Chametz* itself does not taste good and is not edible by itself. Because there are numerous opinions and relevant factors, one should consult their rabbi for specific questions related to taking medicine on Passover. A general summary of the conclusions of the leading authorities in Jewish law is as follows:

<b>Palatable medication</b> (i.e. syrups, throat lozenges, chewable pills) containing even a very small amount of <i>Chametz</i>	Forbidden
<b>Palatable medication</b> (i.e. syrups, throat lozenges, chewable pills) that contain <i>Kitniyot</i> but not <i>Chametz</i>	Permitted
<b>Pills &amp; capsules</b> (that one swallows)	Permitted

\*If one does not know for certain if there is *Chametz* mixed into a pill, we can rely on the fact that today the vast majority of medical pills do not have *Chametz* mixed in (and in those that do, the *Chametz* is not considered fit for human consumption) and can thus be taken on Passover even by one who is ill to a lesser degree.

## Sefirat HaOmer

1. Although one must count the *Omer* every single night in order to be permitted to do so with the blessing, even if one knows that they will be having surgery, or for some reason will not be able to count every day of the *Omer*, they should still begin counting the *Omer* for as long as they are able to with a blessing, and then if they miss some days, continue counting without making the blessing.<sup>479</sup>

- Cedars-Sinai's kosher kitchen is *Kashered* and prepared for Passover under the supervision of the Rabbinical Council of California. All kosher food served from the Cedars-Sinai kitchen on Passover is fully "*Kosher L'Pesach*."
- The food is "*Gebruks*" and the dairy is "*Chalav Stam*" (with the exception of the yogurt, which is "*Chalav Yisrael*").
- *Matzah*, a *Seder* plate, and a *Haggadah* are available upon request, as well as additional *Seder* supplies.

<sup>478</sup> All based on *Nishmat Avraham OH* 466:1.

<sup>479</sup> *Lev Avraham* 20:16 based on *Halichot Shlomo, Moadim* 11:9. In a case of urgent need, one may count the *Omer* after one recites *Maariv*, after *Plag Hamincha*. Guide to Traditional Jewish Observance in a Hospital 81