

## **Intimate Relations: What is allowed & what is not?**

**Question:** I need to have a detailed fatwa concerning Islam's guidance on sexual relations, i.e. what is prohibited and what is allowed? I need to know everything because there are many contradicting views in this special aspect of life. Thank you.

**Name of Mufti**      **Sheikh Muhammad Saleh Al-Munajjid**

**Content of Reply**    In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.  
All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear questioner, thank you for your question and the confidence you place in our service and we pray to Allah to enable us to render this service purely for His Sake.

Islam cares for every aspect of a Muslim's life and gives him clear guidance regarding all things that will affect this life and the next. Imam Muslim reported that some Jews came to Salman Al-Farisi and said to him: "Your Prophet taught you everything even the etiquette of answering the call of nature." And he said: "Yes, he did." In the field of sexual relations, Islam provides complete guidelines prohibiting some practices and allowing others. The purpose of this is to secure the greatest level of happiness and purity in this very important part of life.

**The prominent Muslim scholar Sheikh Muhammad Saleh Al-Munajjid, a prominent Saudi Muslim scholar and lecturer**, gives a clear account of Islam's guidance in this field:

"Sexual relations are among the important matters of life which Islam came to explain and to prescribe proper conduct and rulings which elevate it from the level of mere bestial pleasure and physical desire. Islam correlates it with a righteous intention, supplications and proper conduct which elevate it to the level of worship for which the Muslim will be rewarded. The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) explains this. Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) wrote in his book, At-Tibb An-Nabawi (Medicine of the Prophet):

"Concerning sexual relations, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) brought the most perfect guidance, whereby health may be preserved and people may find pleasure and fulfillment, and it may fulfill the purpose for which it was created, because sex was created for three basic purposes:

1. The preservation and propagation of the human race, until they reach the number of souls that Allah has decreed should be created in this world.
2. Expulsion of semen which may cause harm to the body if it is retained.
3. Fulfilling physical desires and enjoying sexual pleasure. This alone is the feature that will be present in Paradise, because there will be no bearing of offspring there, and no retention of that

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which needs to be relieved by ejaculation. The best doctors suggest that sex is one of the means of maintaining good health.

Among its benefits is that it helps to lower the gaze, enables self-control, enables one to keep away from prohibited things, and all this is also achieved for the woman. It brings benefit to a man with regard to this world and the Hereafter, and also benefits the woman likewise. Hence, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to enjoy regular intimate relations with his wives, and he said, "In your world, women and perfume have been made dear to me." (Narrated by Ahmad and An-Nasa'i)."

And the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "O young men, whoever among you can afford it, let him get married, for it helps him to lower his gaze and protect his chastity. And whoever cannot do that, let him fast, for it will be a protection for him." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Important Things to Be Considered When Having Intimate Relations:

1. Having the sincere intention of doing this only for the sake of Allah. One should intend to do this to protect oneself and one's wife from doing forbidden things, and to increase the number of the Muslim ummah so as to raise its status, for there is honor and pride in large numbers. It should be known that one will be rewarded for this action, even when the people involved obtain immediate pleasure and enjoyment. It was reported from Abu Dharr that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "When any of you engages in sexual intercourse there is a reward" (meaning, when he has intercourse with his wife). They said, "O Messenger of Allah, when any of us fulfils his desire, will he have a reward for that? He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do you not see that if he were to do it in a unlawful manner, he would be punished for that? So if he does it in a lawful manner, he will be rewarded." (Muslim).

2. Intercourse should be preceded by kind words, playfulness and kisses. Almighty Allah says: "Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how you will; but do some good act for your souls beforehand; and fear Allah." (Al-Baqarah: 223) Most of the interpreters of the Qu'ran say that the phrase 'but do some good act for your souls beforehand' refers to the importance of foreplay in increasing interest and making the matter easier.

3. When a man has intercourse with his wife, he should say: "Bismillah, Allahumma janniba ash-shaytan wa jannib ash-shaytan ma razqtana (In the name of Allah. O Allah! Keep us away from Satan and keep Satan away from what You bestow on us (our children))." The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "If Allah decrees that they should have a child, Satan will never harm him." (Al-Bukhari)

4. It is permissible for the husband to have intercourse with his wife in her vagina in whatever manner he wishes, i.e. from behind or from the front, but it is to be noted that it must be in her vagina, which is the place from which the child is born. Allah says: "Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth (have sexual relations with your wives in any manner as long as it is in the vagina

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and not in the anus), when or how you will.” (Al-Baqarah:223) Jabir ibn `Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “The Jews used to say that if a man had intercourse with his wife in her vagina from behind, the child would have a squint.” Then this verse was revealed: “Your wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth (have sexual relations with your wives in any manner as long as it is in the vagina and not in the anus), when or how you will” (Al-Baqarah: 223). The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “From the front or from the back, as long as it is in the vagina.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

5. It is not permissible for the husband, under any circumstances whatsoever, to have intercourse with his wife in her back passage. It is known that the place of ‘tilth’ is the vagina, which is the place from which one hopes a child will be born. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “He is cursed who has intercourse with women in their back passages.” Anal intercourse goes against the fitrah (natural inclinations of man) and is an action which is revolting to those having a sound human nature; it also causes the woman to miss out on her share of pleasure. The back passage is a place of filth and there are other reasons, which confirm the fact that this deed is forbidden.

6. If a man has intercourse with his wife and wants to repeat the act with her a second time, he should perform ablution, because the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “If any one of you has intercourse with his wife then wants to repeat it, let him perform ablution between the two (actions), for it is more energizing for the second time.” (Muslim). This is recommended, but not obligatory. If he is able to have ghusl (complete purifactory bath) between the two acts, this would be better, because of the hadith of Abu Rafi` who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) went around his wives one day and did ghusl in this one’s house and in that one’s house. He (Abu Rafi`) said: I said to him: “O Messenger of Allah, why do you not do one ghusl?” He said, “This is cleaner and better and purer.” (Abu Dawud and An-Nasa’i)

7. It is permissible for a person who has to make ghusl to sleep and delay the ghusl until before the time of prayer, but it is definitely recommended for him to perform ablution before sleeping, because of the hadith of `Umar, who said that he asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), Can any of us sleep when he is junub (in a state of sexual impurity)? The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Yes, but let him perform ablution if he wishes.” (Ibn Hibban).

8. It is forbidden to have intercourse with a woman when she is menstruating (having her period), because Allah says: “They ask you concerning menstruation. Say: that is a harm, therefore keep away from women during menses and go not unto them till they have purified (from menses and have taken a bath). And when they have purified themselves, then go in unto them as Allah has ordained for you (go in unto them in any manner as long as it is in the vagina). Truly, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves (by taking a bath and cleaning and washing thoroughly their private parts, bodies, for their prayers, etc.).” (Al-Baqarah: 222). However, it is permissible for the husband to enjoy his menstruating wife without having intercourse, because of the hadeeth of `A’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) would tell one of us, when she was menstruating, to wear a waist-wrapper, then her husband would lie with her.” (Agreed upon)

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9. It is permissible for the husband to practice `azl (withdrawing the penis to ejaculate outside the vagina) if he does not want to have a child. By the same token it is permissible for him to use condoms, if his wife gives her permission, because she has the right to pleasure and to have children. The evidence for this is the hadith of Jabir ibn `Abd-Allah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, “We used to do `azl at the time of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him). The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) heard about that, and he did not forbid us.” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim) It is better not to do that for several reasons, including the fact that it deprives the woman of pleasure or reduces the amount of pleasure for her, and it cancels out one of the purposes of marriage, which is to increase the number of offspring, as mentioned above.

10. It is forbidden for both spouses to spread the secrets of what happens between them in their private marital life. Indeed, this is one of the most evil things. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Among the most evil of people before Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who comes to his wife and has intercourse with her, then he spreads her secrets.” (Muslim) It was reported from Asma' bint Yazid that she was with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and men and women were sitting with him, and the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “Would any man say what he did with his wife? Would any woman tell others what she did with her husband?” The people remained silent and did not answer. I [Asma'] said: “Yes, by Allah, O Messenger of Allah! They (women) do that, and they (men) do that.” He said “Do not do that. It is like a male devil meeting a female devil in the road and having intercourse with her whilst the people are watching.” (Abu Dawud).

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