

# Acts that Correspond to Human Nature (Sunan ul-Fitrah)

**Description:** This lesson will teach about natural acts of cleanliness that are innate to human nature.

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Objectives:

- To learn the meaning of “*sunan al-fitrah*”.
- To learn six of the “*sunan al-fitrah*” in detail.

Arabic Terms:

- *Fitrah* – innate human nature.
- *Hadith* - (plural – *ahadith*) is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Wajib* – obligatory.
- *Salah* – the Arabic word to denote a direct connection between the believer and Allah. More specifically, in Islam it refers to the formal five daily prayers and is the most important form of worship.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.

## What is *Sunan al-Fitrah*

*Sunan al-Fitrah* are:

- natural practices in tune with how Allah created human beings and urged them to follow. They are natural and innate.
- they are also from the practice that was followed and taught by all the prophets. Allah commands us to follow the guidance of the prophets, ‘follow then, their guidance’ (Quran 6:90).

Complying with these practices ensure cleanliness of the body and purity from dirt and filth. They add honor to human beings and are listed in the following two *hadiths* of the Prophet:



“Five are from the natural practices: circumcision, shaving the pubic hair, cutting the moustache short, clipping the nails, and plucking the armpit hairs.”[\[1\]](#)

“Ten are from natural practices: clipping the moustache, letting the beard grow, using the tooth-stick, (cleaning) by putting water in the nose, clipping the nails, washing the knuckles and finger joints, plucking the hair under the armpits, shaving the pubic hairs, using water to clean one’s private parts (after urination).” The narrator said: ‘I have forgotten the tenth, unless it is rinsing the mouth.’[\[2\]](#)

## Some of the *Sunan al-Fitrah* in detail

### 1. Circumcision

For males, it refers to the removal of the loose foreskin covering a male’s penis. Circumcision prevents dirt from getting on one’s penis, and also makes it easy to keep it clean. An uncircumcised penis can suffer from chronic irritation, infection, phimosis, paraphimosis, penile cancer, penile lesions, and venereal warts.

For females, it refers to cutting a slight outer portion of the clitoris and is not required, yet is done in some Muslim countries, particularly in Africa.

Circumcision is recommended to be done on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after the birth of the child. However it is also permissible anytime after that. Circumcision is better when done at an early age as it heals quicker. Delayed circumcision becomes required (*wajib*) upon reaching the age of puberty when ablution and *salah* become compulsory (*wajib*). Prophet Muhammad said,

“Ibrahim circumcised himself after he was eighty years old.”[\[3\]](#)

**“Allah said, ‘Then We revealed to you: Follow the faith of Ibrahim, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists.’” (Quran Nahl:1 23)**

If it is difficult for an adult new to Islam to get circumcised because he’s a grown up, then he is not to be forced. Adult circumcision is done by urologists, costs around \$1500 and the healing period ranges from a week to two weeks.

None is to be circumcised after death.

### 2. Shaving pubic hairs and pulling out underarm hairs

The pubic hair can be shaved, trimmed, or pulled out. Removal of pubic hair is a *sunnah* agreed upon by all Muslim scholars. It is also *sunnah* to shave the pubic hair, but other means are permissible. In other words, it is best to shave, but all other methods of hair removal are permissible.

The Prophet fixed the maximum number of days for hair removal to be 40. If they grow long before then, they are to be removed.

### **3. Clipping nails of hand and feet**

It's an agreed upon *sunnah* for men and women. The purpose is to remove the dirt under the nails and also so they do not resemble the claws of animals. A Muslim woman should also trim the nails of her hands and feet every 40 days as it is closer to her innate human nature.

### **4. Pulling out underarm hairs**

The *sunnah* is to pull out the hair, however shaving is permissible because the purpose is cleanliness.

### **5. Cutting the mustache short**

The *sunnah* is to shorten the mustache. It can be done by trimming the edges so the lip becomes visible or lightening/trimming it from everywhere.

It is preferred to cut the pubic hairs, pluck out the underarm hairs, cut the nails and trim the moustache on a weekly basis, a practice which is most hygienic. If some unnecessary hair is left on the body for a longer period of time, it may disturb the person. One may leave this action for forty days, but no longer.

### **6. Growing the beard and letting it become thick**

Unlike the perception of some people, the beard is something natural and a full beard does not mean the person is untidy or unkept. The Prophet said,

'Oppose the polytheists and grow the beard and cut the moustache.'[\[4\]](#)

'Oppose the polytheists, trim the moustache and grow the beards.'[\[5\]](#)

'Cut the moustache and let the beards grow, and oppose the Magians.'[\[6\]](#)

These *ahadith* indicate that it is required (*wajib*) to have a beard and it has two benefits:

- a. opposing the polytheists who generally do not keep beards.
- b. it conforms with the natural human inclination (*fitrah*) upon which Allah has created human beings.

Keeping a "full beard" (hair on the jawbone and chin) is *wajib* (compulsory) on a Muslim.

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Endnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim*

[3] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[4] *Agreed upon*

[5] *Saheeh Muslim*

[6] *Saheeh Muslim*

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