

# Intimate Issues

**Description:** A brief guide to intimate issues and bedroom etiquette according to the laws of Islam.

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## Objectives

- To understand that sexual well-being is an important health issue.
- There are both the *halal* and *haram* aspects of intimate issues.

## Arabic Terms

- *Zina* " Adultery and fornication involving vaginal and anal intercourse, but also refers to other types of inappropriate sexual behavior.
- *Halal* " permissible.
- *Haram* " forbidden or prohibited.
- *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.
- *Ibadah* " worship.
- *Ghusl* " ritual bath.
- *Sahabah* - the plural form of "Sahabi," which translates to Companions. A *sahabi*, as the word is commonly used today, is someone who saw Prophet Muhammad, believed in him and died as a Muslim.

## Introduction

The primary sources of Islam, the Quran and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad, together form a comprehensive guide to life. Thus, Islam is a holistic religion that takes into account emotional and physical health as well as spiritual needs. Looking after our health and wellbeing is very important and this includes our sexual wellbeing. Islam does not shy away from this topic rather it addresses it openly. Allah created the physical act of sexual intercourse to fulfil both physiological and emotional needs, and marriage is a *halal* way to satisfy these needs. Therefore, an understanding of intimate issues and bedroom etiquette is extremely important.



## Zina

In Islam, illicit sexual activities are covered by the term *zina*. There are significant repercussions for engaging in such activities not the least being that they are completely *haram*.

1. *Zina* is a sin. Engaging in it will endanger our physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. "Nor come closer to illicit sexual intimacy for it is a shameful and immoral, opening the door (to other immorality)." (Quran 17:32)
2. The spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Suffering the physical consequences of these diseases that can range from discomfort to impaired fertility.
3. Unwanted pregnancies.
4. Family breakdown.
5. Emotional difficulties that arise from relationships formed without any commitment.

A person engaging in *zina* causes themselves and their spouse significant harm. If one partner tries to fulfil their physical or emotional needs in a *haram* way, the other partner suffers in many ways. Their self-esteem is damaged and their sense of security eroded as they lose trust in their partner. They could begin to feel emotionally unstable feeling as if their world has been turned upside down. The person who engages in illicit sexual behavior suffers grave consequences, including but not limited, putting a metaphorical barrier between themselves and Allah, causing severe family dysfunction, the alienation of family and friends, and painful emotions such as guilt and shame.

## Marriage

Allah does not simply forbid something that is part of natural human behavior; he gives us a viable alternative. Marriage, a contract between a man and a woman, allows two

people to become one in their *ibadah* and obedience to Allah. Whenever a young person shows a desire to marry they should be encouraged and aided. Obstacles should not be put in their way rather they should be supported and assisted to marry as quickly as possible so that they are not tempted to fall into sin. A *halal* marriage is a means to satisfy perfectly normal sexual desires, therefore Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, encouraged people to marry and his excellent advice can be found throughout the *Sunnah*.

oeWhoever among you possesses the physical and financial resources to marry should do so, because it helps one to guard their modesty, and whoever is unable to marry should fast, as fasting diminishes one's sexual desire." [1]

The benefits of marriage are numerous. Allah tells us that married people are like garments for one another; they protect each other and are close companions. Marriage is viewed as the longest, most continuous act of *ibadah* believers can perform over the course of their lives. Prophet Muhammad said that when a person gets married, he or she has fulfilled half of the religion, he continued his advice saying fear Allah in regards to the other half. [2] Married people treat each other kindly and lovingly. The sexual act is something to be enjoyed and to this end Prophet Muhammad encouraged foreplay. He said, oeNone of you should fall upon his wife like an animal; let there be a 'messenger' between you." oeAnd what is a messenger?" they asked, and he replied, oeKisses and words." [3]

As married couples try to fulfil the rights and needs of each other, their affection for each other will grow, and so too will their rewards. The very act of sexual intercourse is rewardable. Prophet Muhammad explained to the *sahabah* that the lawful sexual act was a form of charity. The *sahabah* responded asking the question, oeWhen one of us fulfils his sexual desire, will he be given a reward for that?" And Prophet Muhammad said, oeDo you not think that were he to act upon it unlawfully, he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acts upon it lawfully he will be rewarded." [4]

**oeYour wives are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth when and how you will, and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves. And fear God, and know that you will meet Him..." (Quran 2:223)**

In the above verse Allah explains that a married couple is free to enjoy and explore each other's bodies in many various ways provided both partners consent. It is permissible for a married couple to masturbate each other. Oral sex is allowed but it must not cause harm or degradation, and impurities must not be swallowed. It is *halal* for them to see all parts of their own body and the body of their spouse. In fact, there are very few prohibitions for a married couple.

## Prohibitions

1. Refrain from sexual intercourse when a woman is menstruating or during post-partum bleeding. Intercourse should only recommence once the wife has performed her *ghusl*.

2. Anal intercourse is a very grave sin. Even if both partners are agreeable to this act it is still a sin. Mutual agreement does not change that.
3. A couple must refrain from sexual intercourse while fasting. A person should ask their partner's permission to fast a non-obligatory fast in case the lack of sexual intercourse will cause the other partner hardship.
4. It is forbidden to reveal the talk that occurs in a marriage bed. In intimate situations secrets are revealed and souls are laid bare. These things should not be revealed except in dire circumstances, for example, in the case of a medical emergency.

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Endnotes:

[1] *Saheeh Muslim*

[2] *Al-Bayhaqi*

[3] *Musnad Al-Firdaus- Imam Daylami*

[4] *Saheeh Muslim*

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