



Reprinted from *Living the Halachic Process* by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

Intravenous Nutrition on Yom Kippur

Question: How does the fact that one can receive nourishment intravenously affect the laws of eating on Yom Kippur? May one who has trouble fasting have an intravenous drip? Should someone who needs to eat for medical reasons use intravenous instead?

Answer: We will start with a discussion of whether IV nourishment is a violation of eating on Yom Kippur, which affects both questions.

Generally, prohibitions of eating are violated by swallowing.¹ Yet, the Chatam Sofer² maintains that in order to fully violate the prohibition of eating on Yom Kippur, a requisite amount must sit in one's digestive track, where it can impact the body. Therefore, one could claim that it

does not make a difference how the impact is delivered. However, the Acharonim advance strong questions against the Chatam Sofer's position,³ and all seem to agree that there must also be some normal process of eating in order to entail a violation.⁴ Ingesting in a manner in which one does not derive normal enjoyment from the eating process (e.g., when the food is scorching hot) is forbidden only Rabbinically.⁵ Several poskim put IV nourishment at the same level.⁶ However, it may actually be even more lenient; not only is intravenous nourishment not normal eating, but it also bypasses the digestive track and goes straight into the blood.

It is true that when pikuach nefesh⁷ allows one to violate a Torah law (such as eating on Yom Kippur or eating a forbidden food), he should do so in a way that is least severely forbidden.⁸ Nevertheless, poskim do not require one to get nourishment intravenously instead of eating on Yom Kippur. We will present several reasons, starting with the technical and working our way to the fundamental:

¹ See *Chulin* 103b.

² *Shut Chatam Sofer, Orach Chayim* 127.

³ See *Achiezer* III:61; *Chelkat Ya'akov, Orach Chayim* 216.

⁴ See *ibid.* and *Tzitz Eliezer* X:25.21.

⁵ Rambam, *Shevitat Assor* 2:5.

⁶ *Teshuvot V'Hanhagot* II:290; *Chelkat Ya'akov* op. cit.

⁷ Efforts to save a life.

⁸ *Yoma* 83a.

1) Inserting the catheter on Yom Kippur might be as severe a violation of Halacha as eating.⁹

2) It is possible that the IV nutrition will not be as healthy as eating food normally, or that the chemicals, the pain, and/or the possibility of infection make it an unsatisfactory option.¹⁰

3) In general, when pikuach nefesh allows one to violate a Torah law, efforts to reduce the severity of the violation are likely only Rabbinic.¹¹ For this or other reasons, one does not have to find unnatural ways to obviate the need for applying pikuach nefesh.¹²

4) Taking steps that are not medically indicated in order to enable one to fast might even be considered obviating the divine decree that this person will be too sick to fast.¹³

The question of whether someone may receive IV nutrition on Yom Kippur so as not to not be as adversely affected by the fast is a good one and should be broken up into a few parts. We mentioned above that many consider such nutrition a

full-fledged Rabbinic violation of Yom Kippur, which is certainly forbidden without a real medical need. Teshuvot V'Hanhagot¹⁴ makes an interesting (but, as he admits, unproven) claim that IV nutrition violates a Torah-level positive commandment to afflict oneself on Yom Kippur.¹⁵ Regarding a healthy person, then, there would be no justification to use IV nutrition. Even if it does not constitute a violation, it still seems like something novel that is against the spirit of the law, which would be a bad idea in general, and certainly on Yom Kippur.

However, if one is sick enough to be bedridden, which is usually sufficient cause to allow the violation of at least some Rabbinic laws,¹⁶ it might be permitted to use IV nutrition. For a person in such a condition, swallowing medicinal pills without water is indeed permitted.¹⁷ In the case of one who is legitimately but not dangerously sick who may become sicker by fasting, taking pills or having an IV inserted before Yom Kippur or by a non-Jew on Yom Kippur might be permitted.¹⁸ Someone in that situation (or one who knows that he fasts horribly) should discuss alternatives

⁹ *Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim* IV:101.3. Rav Feinstein comments that, in some cases, this could be obviated by inserting the catheter before Yom Kippur.

¹⁰ See *Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim* III:90; *Maharsham* I:123.

¹¹ *Kiryat Sefer, Ma'achalot Assurot* 14.

¹² See *Minchat Shlomo* I:7.

¹³ *Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim* op. cit.

¹⁴ II:290.

¹⁵ *Vayikra* 23:27.

¹⁶ See *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 328:17; *ibid. Yoreh Deah* 155:3.

¹⁷ *Shemirat Shabbat K'Hilchata* 39:8.

¹⁸ See *Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim* III:91; *Teshuvot V'Hanhagot* op. cit.

with his personal rabbi. In this matter, neither unnecessary “torture”, at one end of the spectrum, nor improper leniency, at the other end, is appropriate.

