

71968 - Manners of Visiting the Sick

the question

What are the manners of visiting the sick?

Summary of answer

Visiting the sick is a confirmed Sunnah. The reward attained by the one who visits the sick is likened to the harvest reaped by one who gathers fruit.

Detailed answer

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Visiting the sick is called `iyadah in Arabic (from a root word meaning return) because people come back time after time.

Ruling on visiting the sick

Some of the scholars are of the view that it is a confirmed Sunnah (Sunnah muakkadah). Shaykh al-Islam (Ibn Taymiyah) favoured the view that it is a communal obligation (fard kifayah), as

stated in al-Ikhtiyarat (p. 85) and this is the correct view.

It is proven in al-Sahihayn that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “There are five duties that the Muslim owes to his brother Muslim,” one of which is visiting the sick. According to another version: “The rights of one Muslim over another are...”

Al-Bukhari said: “Chapter on the obligation of visiting the sick, and he narrated the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “Feed the hungry, visit the sick and free the captives.”

This hadith indicates that it is obligatory, and may be understood as meaning that it is a communal obligation, like feeding the hungry and freeing the captives. Al-Nawawi narrated that there is scholarly consensus that it is not wajib (obligatory). Al-Hafiz said in al-Fath (10/117): i.e., it is not obligatory for individuals.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said in al-Sharh al-Mumtī’ (5/173):

“The correct view is that it is a communal obligation, and the Muslims are obliged to visit their sick.”

Virtues of visiting the sick

There are many hadiths which speak of its virtue, such as the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “When the Muslim visits his (sick) Muslim brother, he is harvesting the fruits of Paradise until he returns.” (Narrated by Muslim, 2568)

The reward attained by the one who visits the sick is likened to the harvest reaped by one who gathers fruit.

According to al-Tirmidhi (2008), the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever visits a sick person or visits a brother in Islam, a caller cries out to him: ‘May you be happy, may your walking be blessed, and may you occupy a dignified position in Paradise’.” (Classed as hasan by al-Albani in Sahih al-Tirmidhi)

Imam Ahmad narrated that Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever visits a sick person is plunging into mercy until he sits down, and when he sits down he is submerged in it.” (Classed as sahih by al-Albani in al-Silsilah al-Sahihah, 2504)

Al-Tirmidhi (969) narrated that ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say: “There is no Muslim who visits a (sick) Muslim early in the morning but seventy thousand angels send blessings upon him until evening comes, and if he visits him in the evening, seventy thousand angels send blessings upon him until morning comes, and he will have a garden in Paradise.” (Classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih al-Tirmidhi)

Visiting the sick does not involve only those whom you know, rather it is prescribed for those whom you know and those whom you do not know. This was stated by al-Nawawi in Sharh Muslim.

Definition of the sick person whom it is obligatory to visit

It is the sick person whose sickness is preventing him from seeing people. If he is sick but he is still going out and seeing people, then it is not obligatory to visit him. (Al-Sharh al-Mumti’, 5/171)

Visiting a non-mahram woman

There is no sin in a man visiting a non-mahram woman, or a woman visiting a non-mahram man, so long as the following conditions are met:

- proper covering,
- no risk of fitnah,
- and not being alone together.

Imam al-Bukhari said: “Chapter on women visiting (sick) men. Umm al-Darda visited one of the Ansari men from the mosque.” Then he narrated a hadith from `Aishah (may Allah be pleased

with her), who said that she visited Abu Bakr and Bilal (may Allah be pleased with them both) when they fell sick when they first came to Madinah.

Muslim narrated from Anas that Abu Bakr said to ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them), after the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) died: “Let us go to Umm Ayman and visit her as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to visit her,” so they went to her.

Ibn al-Jawzi said: “This is to be interpreted as referring to one from whom there is no fear of fitnah, such as an old woman.”

Can you visit a non-Muslim patient?

There is no sin in [visiting a non-Muslim who is sick](#), if that serves an interest. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited a Jewish boy and called him to Islam, and he became Muslim. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 1356)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was present when his paternal uncle Abu Talib was dying, and he called him to Islam but he refused. (Agreed upon)

The purpose in that case may be to call the person to Islam, or to restrain his evil, or to soften his heart, and so on. (See Fath al-Bari, 10/125)

Should visiting the sick be repeated?

Some scholars are of the view that one should not visit every day so that it will not become burdensome for the sick person. The correct view is that it varies according to the situation. Some people may be dear to the sick person and it may be hard for him if he does not see them every day. In that case it is Sunnah to visit continuously, so long as they do not know that the sick person dislikes it. (Hashiyat Ibn Qasim, 3/12)

One should not sit too long with the sick person

The visitor should not sit for too long with the sick person, rather the visit should be short so that it does not cause any hardship to him or his family. The sick person may pass through periods when he suffers pain because of his sickness, or he may do something that he would not like anyone to see, so sitting with him for too long will cause him embarrassment.

However, it depends on the situation; the sick person may like some people to sit with him for a long time. (Hashiyat Ibn Qasim, 3/12; al-Sharh al-Mumti', 5/174)

When should you visit the sick?

There is nothing in the Sunnah that suggests that there is a specific time for visiting the sick.

Ibn al-Qayyim said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not specify any particular day or time for visiting the sick, rather he prescribed that for his ummah by night and by day, at all times." (Zad al-Ma'ad, 1/497)

Some of the salaf used to visit the sick at the beginning of the day or in the early evening, so that the angels would send blessings upon them for the longest time, based on the hadith quoted above: "There is no Muslim who visits a (sick) Muslim early in the morning but seventy thousand angels send blessings upon him until evening comes, and if he visits him in the evening, seventy thousand angels send blessings upon him until morning comes, and he will have a garden in Paradise."

But we should pay attention to the condition of the sick person and what is easiest for him; the visitor should not choose the time that suits him best, if that is going to cause hardship to the sick person or his family. That can be worked out with the sick person himself or with his family.

Frequent visits from people who do not take care to keep their visits short or choose the right time may make the sick person's sickness even worse.

What is the du'a for visiting a sick person?

Du`a should be made for the sick person in the manner narrated in the Sunnah: “La bas, tuhur in sha Allah (No worry, it is a purification, if Allah wills).” (Narrated by al-Bukhari)

Du`a for healing should be said three times. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) visited Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas and said: “O Allah, heal Sa’d,” three times. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5659 and Muslim 1628)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to place his right hand on the sick person and say: “Adhhib al-bas Rabb an-nas, wa’shfi anta al-Shafi, la shifa-a illa shifauka shifa-an la yughadir saqaman (Take away the pain, O Lord of mankind, and **grant healing**, for You are the Healer, and there is no healing but Your healing that leaves no trace of sickness).” (Narrated by Muslim, 2191)

Ahmad and Abu Dawd (3106) narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever visits a sick person who is not yet dying, and says seven times in his presence: Asalu Allah al-‘Azim Rabb al-‘arsh il-‘azim an yashfiyaka (I ask Allah the Almighty, Lord of the mighty Throne, to heal you), Allah will heal him of that sickness.” (Classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud)

The visitor should ask him how he is and how he is feeling, etc. That is proven from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as narrated by al-Tirmidhi (983) and classed as hasan by al-Albani.

It is also narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari that `Aishah did that when she visited Abu Bakr and Bilal (may Allah be pleased with them both).

Reassuring the sick person and giving him hope of a long life

A hadith concerning that was narrated by al-Tirmidhi (2087) but it is a weak hadith: “When you enter upon a sick person and reassure him that he is going to live, that does not change anything, but it lifts his spirits.” It was classed as da’if (weak) by al-Albani in Da’if al-Tirmidhi.

But it is supported in meaning by the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “La bas, tuhur in sha Allah (No worry, it is a purification, if Allah wills).” So we should try

to cheer him up and give him glad tidings of healing in sha Allah, for that will comfort the sick person. (See al-Sharh al-Mumti', 5/171-176)

And Allah knows best.