



## Dissolving Colored Pill in Contact Lens Solution on Shabbat

לעילוי נשמת  
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

**Question:** I have instructions to put my contact lenses between uses in a solution in which one is supposed to put in a tablet, which dissolves and gives the liquid a tinge of yellow (the color has no significance). Is the dissolving or the turning of colors a halachic problem on Shabbat?

**Answer:** Actually, if the contact lenses are “soft,” the biggest problem is putting the lenses in the solution. There is a *machloket* on that question, which we would be remiss not to address at all.

One is allowed to wash non-absorbent materials (e.g., dishes). One is forbidden to wash absorbent fabrics, even if one only soaks or scrubs, or squeezes out the fabric (Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Orach Chayim 302:9). Washing applies to leather to some degree, but putting water on it alone is permitted; there may also be distinctions between soft and hard leather (see Mishna Berura 302:39). To simplify the *machloket* among recent *poskim*, the main questions are how to categorize the somewhat absorbent plastic of soft contact lenses, and whether the fact that one is not cleaning away noticeable dirt makes a difference.

You are assuming, like most, that it is permissible to soak lenses between uses in a solution which keeps them moist, helps remove impurities, and disinfects them, and that is perfectly fine (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 15:83).

Your question deals with two concerns; we will start with dissolving a pill. Making a solid break down into small particles sounds like *tochein* (grinding), but it is not forbidden on those grounds. For one, pills are formed from crushed particles, so crushing pills is only returning them to their previous state (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 33:4). This is permitted under the rule of *ein tochein achar tochein* (Rama, OC 321:12). Presumably, dissolving in a liquid does not fit into *tochein* in any case.

It is forbidden to change an object's phase, e.g., crushing ice into water, but that is only when one crushes directly, not if he puts it in a place where it dissolves itself (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 320:9; Mishna Berura ad loc. 34). When it dissolves in a liquid, some say it is permitted even to crush (*ibid.*) and it removes questions of *nolad* (a form of *muktzeh*) (*ibid.* 35). Additionally, the particles do not change in form to become liquid, but are just suspended in it. Assuming the final solution is not thick, there is no

problem of *lisha* (kneading).

Sometimes it is permitted to mix things in a way that one gives color to the other; sometimes it is forbidden. One rule that can justify many cases is – *ein tzvi'ah b'ochlin* (coloring involving foods is permitted). The Beit Yosef (OC 320) brings this from *Rishonim*, and seems to accept it in Shulchan Aruch, OC 320:20. While this is rule is basically accepted (see Sha'ar Hatziyun 318:64), the idea is more of a sign that context is crucial regarding coloring than as an independent rule. Another factor that can play a role specifically regarding coloring is: if the coloring is done “cleanly” or in a “manner of dirtying” (e.g., using a rag to clean up a colorful spill – see Mishna Berura 320:59). These leniencies will not help in our case, but the following may: 1) The colored object will not last (or keep its color) for long (see Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 14:19). 2) The object is not the type whose color makes a difference (see Orchot Shabbat 15:(88)). This is in addition to leniencies that apply throughout the laws of Shabbat. Specifically, *p'sik reishei d'lo niche lei* (a person lacks intention or interest for the result of a *melacha* that will definitely happen). While we do not *pasken* to permit it alone, it is a strong mitigating situation (see *Yabia Omer* I, *Orach Chayim* 19.). It might also be possible to add the leniency of things done for medical reasons (i.e., avoiding eye infections). Considering all the above (undesired color

in a thing that is not made to be colored or kept), the tablet in the contact lens solution is not forbidden due to coloring.

Therefore, it is not problematic to put the tablet into the contact lens solution. ■

## Having a dispute?



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