



NHS  
**MUSLIM**  
NETWORK

# New to Hijab



**Guidance for Muslim colleagues who want to start wearing the Hijab, and for educational purposes.**

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## About the Hijab

### What is the Hijab?

Hijab is an Arabic word that means veil, but you might simply know it as a “headscarf,” or more generally, as the practice of a Muslim woman covering her hair and body, with a few exceptions like face and hands. The burqa and niqab are different from the Hijab; they refer to styles of covering that are extended to the entire body, including the face.

### Are Muslim women required to wear the Hijab?

A Muslim woman can choose to wear the Hijab or not, that is her choice as she has freewill, and it is only between her and Allah (God). No one else has the right to judge. The Quran and supporting Hadith (Islam's two primary sources of Islamic law) are clear that covering the hair is a required part of dress for Muslim women. Scholars throughout history, both men and women, have agreed that covering the hair, along with the entire body with the exception of the face, hands and feet, is obligatory.

### Can fathers or husbands force Muslim women to wear the Hijab?

No. Muslim women choose to wear Hijab as an act of faith. They consider it a fulfilment of one of the many duties of a Muslim, which in this case, is to dress modestly and wear the Hijab.

### Is wearing the Hijab an act of submission to men?

No. It is an act of submission to Allah and the love of modesty for both men and women. In the Quran, the headscarf is discussed in the context of modesty for both sexes. For example men are ordered to lower their gaze and guard their chastity. This is followed by the injunction of modesty for women through Hijab and behaviour as well.

### Are Muslim men required to dress modestly?

Yes. Muslim men are required to cover their bodies properly, as well as behave in a modest manner. They are not, for instance, allowed to wear short shorts or tight jeans. Men must cover between their knees and navel at all times.

## **Why are Muslim men not required to wear a Hijab or headscarf?**

In Islam, Allah recognises men and women as equal but different. While modesty is the goal for both sexes, how it is practiced in terms of dress differs.

## **Don't Muslim women get hot wearing the Hijab in the summer?**

Yes, beating the heat in the summer is a challenge, as is for everyone. However, because Muslim women who wear the Hijab are doing it out of love for Allah, they persevere for the spiritual rewards.

## **Do Muslim women have to wear black?**

No. There is no colour requirement for the Hijab or other forms of dress. However, it is recommended that clothing be clean, and simple.

## **Why do some Muslim women wear a Hijab and others don't?**

It's a personal choice and being a Muslim means constantly striving to strengthen your belief (Iman), and different women are at different stages of their spiritual journey. Allah knows best and we don't judge.

## **Do you feel different when you wear a Hijab?**

Yes, many women feel reassured, feel respected, and acts as a reminder of who they are as Muslim women. For more information, see page 10.

## **Do you take your Hijab off at home?**

Yes, unless there is a non-mahram (see page 9) man present.

## **Do you sleep in the Hijab?**

No.

## **Do you shower in the Hijab?**

No.

## Wearing the Hijab

Wearing a Hijab for the first time can be daunting. Taking that first step can be hard. Being conscious of what people will say and think may be running through your mind, however remember having good intentions for everything you do is part of being a Muslim. Allah rewards a Muslim on their action based on the intention.

When you decide to wear a Hijab, do it because you want to obey and please Allah, to earn his blessings and no one else.

## Preparation

Start off with your intention and say “Bismillah”, which translates to “in the name of Allah”, which empowers one by seeking Allah’s help before starting an action.

Read the Quran; specifically the verses that refer to women’s dressing; this will help remind you of the reason you decided to wear the Hijab.

## Shopping

Go on an exploration to see what is out there, the types of Hijabs, with different lengths, materials, colours and textures to establish what suits you and your daily lifestyle. Bearing in mind your day-to-day activities, job role and work environment. Please note, within certain healthcare roles there may be dress codes for health and safety reasons that need to be taken into consideration.

## Trial and error

Trial wearing the Hijab at home in your own space. Try wrapping the Hijab in different ways to find what suits you. Various online platforms have lots of tutorials to aid women in ways to wear different types of Hijab. Remember it takes practice to incorporate the Hijab into your daily routine.

## Facing the world

Prepare yourself for possibly being treated differently. Prepare yourself for a range of different reactions i.e. the positive, indifferent and, unfortunately sometimes, the negative.

Most of the time, people will ask questions out of curiosity. Be ready to answer questions, should you feel comfortable. Remember you may not know all the answers yet, so there is nothing wrong with saying you don't know.

Where you are asked questions that you don't want to answer or don't feel comfortable with, then stop - take a breath. Ground yourself. Sometimes people ask questions because they don't know how else to respond. You can communicate that you don't want to talk about it anymore. Then, refocus on what you do want to talk about.

Remember it is your story and your journey. You might want to consider creating a statement, which encapsulates your reasons for wearing the Hijab, an example of what that may sound like could be ***“This has been something I have been thinking about for a while, and I have started to wear the Hijab because it is a fundamental part of my faith, and I am strengthening my relationship with my Creator”***.

While you may hope for a caring, comforting, and supportive response, sometimes people are more likely to have a flood of reactions. You would have been dealing with this change for a while, but remember for the other person this is new and unexpected information. So from their perspective, this may be shocking, scary, and difficult to understand. They may feel angry, helpless, confused sometimes guilty if they did not expect you to start wearing the Hijab. It is useful to realise that they may feel concerned for you and overwhelmed while they scramble to make sense of what is happening. Remember the media does not always portray a positive image of Islam or Muslims, and many people rely on media for information.

Let them see the positive changes that wearing the Hijab has had on you.

## Questions from family and friends

Consider the timing and the place you disclose your intention of wearing the Hijab especially to your family and friends. If possible, find the time to sit with family and friends and let them know about your decision to start wearing the Hijab.

Just remind them that you are still you, nothing has changed except the fact that you are wearing a Hijab.

Sometimes the decision to wear the Hijab, is hindered by what others may think. Remember you are doing this for you and Allah. A lot of times we unduly expect the worse reaction, whereas most people will be supportive and understanding.

## At work

Talk to your line manager and let them know you will start wearing the Hijab, and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions, if you feel comfortable.

Decide on whether you want to tell colleagues, or if you want your line manager to provide people with a heads up. Agree with your line manager if you are comfortable answering questions from your team and wider colleagues about your choice of wearing the Hijab, or whether you would prefer not to discuss it.

It is important to know your rights at work, and support available for you.

## Support

Never think you are alone. Always talk to Allah, in dua, in prayers, your thoughts and intentions are known to Allah, and you only need to raise your hands up and ask for anything.

Fellow Muslim's sisters are available to support you and to speak to. Find a support network to ask questions and hear stories from others about their journey with the Hijab. Support networks can be found at work, mosque, online, and/or community groups.

Please remember that the National NHS Muslim Network is always available for support.

## 7 tips to get started with the Hijab

### 1. Wear it for the sake of Allah

Make the intention to wear the Hijab for the sake of your creator. Take the first step and He will take care of the rest. Always remember, Allah is the ever-protecting.

### 2. Make the decision to start

Set a day and don't back down from your decision. Leading up to the day, offer prayers, Istikhara (prayer for guidance), ask Allah for strength, and remember the power of patience and faith. Don't worry about tomorrow, leave that to your creator.

### 3. Ignore the outside noise

Remember, you won't stop being yourself because of the outside noise. When you start wearing the Hijab, you might come across a lot of judgment but remind yourself of your intention and why you are doing it.

### 4. Take it one day at a time

Take baby steps. Try wearing the Hijab when going out every other day and soon with the help of Allah and patience, every other day will turn into weeks, then months. Before you know it, your Hijab will become second nature.

### 5. Work your way up to proper Hijab

In the company of non-mahram (the opposite sex that one is allowed to marry – see page 9), sisters should cover their entire bodies besides the hands and face. Your figure should be concealed with loose clothing and your hair, chest and neck should be covered, too.

### 6. Give yourself a chance and have faith in Allah

No matter what anyone says, making the decision to start wearing the Hijab is between you and your Creator. You may stumble, you may even fall, but try and try again and you will reach your goal – InshAllah (Allah willing).

### 7. Start with a friend or family member

It's only natural for us to seek moral support, especially when embarking on a new journey. Starting this journey with a friend or family member will provide you with the support and motivation you need, and increase you in rewards. As we know, when we encourage another person onto a good deed, we also receive the rewards of the deed without any being taken away from that person.



## What is a mahram?

A woman's mahram is a person whom she is never permitted to marry because of their close blood relationship, because they are related by marriage, or because of breastfeeding.

A woman does not need to wear a Hijab around her mahram, which includes the following:

- Your male children (Son, Grandson, Great Grandson)
- Your male parent (Father, Grandfather, Great Grandfather)
- Children of your parents (Brother, Half Brother)
- Sons of your Brother/Half Brother/Sister/Half Sister
- Fathers Brother/Half Brother
- Mothers Brother/Half Brother
- Husband
- Your Husband's male parent (Father, Grandfather, Great Grandfather)
- Your daughters Husband (Son-in-Law), and Grand Daughters Husband
- Children of your Husband (Step-son)
- The sons of a woman/women that breast fed you within the first 2.5 years of your life

Anyone not listed above would be classified as non-mahram, and will be required to wear the Hijab in their presence.

**A woman is not required to wear a Hijab if she is in the company of women only.**

## Twitter video supporting World Hijab Day

In support of World Hijab Day, the National NHS Muslim Network composed a video of Muslim sisters who work in the NHS, and choose to wear the Hijab.

Please see video below:



# Thank you

For more information please visit our website:

**[nhsmuslimnetwork.co.uk](http://nhsmuslimnetwork.co.uk)**

For further support, please contact the NHS Muslim Network via email:

**[england.muslim1@nhs.net](mailto:england.muslim1@nhs.net)**

