The Chanukah Story

Chanukah is a Jewish holiday celebrated for eight days and nights. It starts on the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev.

In Hebrew, the word "Chanukah" means "dedication." The name reminds us that this holiday commemorates the re-dedication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem following the Jewish victory over the Syrian-Greeks in 164 B.C.E.

In 167 B.C.E. the Jewish Temple was seized by Syrian-Greek soldiers and dedicated to the worship of idols. This upset the Jewish people, but many were afraid to fight back for fear of reprisals. Then the Syrian-Greek emperor Antiochus made the observance of Judaism an offence punishable by death. He also ordered all Jews to worship Greek idols.

Jewish resistance began in the village of Modiin, near Jerusalem. Greek soldiers forcibly gathered the Jewish villagers and told them to bow down to an idol, then eat the flesh of a pig, both practices that are forbidden to Jews. A Greek officer ordered Mattathias, a priest who was a G-d fearing Jew, to give in to their demands, but Mattathias refused.

Mattathias and his five sons went to the mountains, where other Jews wishing to fight against the Greeks joined them. Eventually they succeeded in retaking their land from the Greeks. These rebels became known as the Maccabees, or Hasmoneans.

Once the Maccabees had regained control, they returned to the Temple in Jerusalem. By this time it had been spiritually defiled by being used for the worship of idols. Jewish troops were determined to purify the Temple and light its menorah.

But to their dismay, they discovered that there was only one day's worth of oil left in the Temple. They lit the menorah anyway, and Hashem made a miracle: the small amount of oil lasted for eight days.

This is the miracle of the Chanukah oil that is celebrated every year when Jews light a special menorah. One candle is lit on the first night of Chanukah, two on the second, and so on, until eight candles are lit.

Chanukah in short

Chanukah celebrates light overcoming darkness, and the freedom to practise our faith. Each night we add one more light to remember the miracle. It falls on the 25th of Kislev: this year from the evening of Friday 4 December to Saturday 12 December 2026.

Chanukah Traditions

Every community has its own Chanukah traditions, but some are almost universally practised: lighting the menorah, spinning the dreidel and eating fried foods.

Lighting the menorah: to remember the miracle of the oil, a menorah is lit every night for eight nights.



Spinning the dreidel: a popular Chanukah game. The dreidel is a four-sided top with a Hebrew letter on each side: Nun, Gimel, Hei, Shin. They stand for "Nes Gadol Haya Sham", "A great miracle happened there."



Eating fried foods: because Chanukah celebrates the miracle of oil, it is traditional to eat fried foods such as latkes and doughnuts. Latkes are pancakes made from potatoes and onions. Doughnuts are jelly-filled, fried, and sometimes dusted with sugar.

In hospital or a care home? Please check with ward or care staff before lighting any candle or flame. For religious guidance, ask the chaplaincy or Jewish support team, or use the contact numbers on the front cover.

ACS Acheinu Cancer Support	BIKUR CHOLIM	camp SIMCHA Making a difference for seriously ill children	The Cheer-Up Squad
020 8806 7227	020 8800 7575	020 8202 9297	020 8800 0008
Yad Chesed Volunteers	ezracare	EZRA UMARPEH	GEZINT Healing Through Faithful Care
020 8806 1000	0161 708 8000	020 8211 7999	0333 613 9625
Hand in Hand	Lecheiris A Spark In The Dark	LEV ECHOD CANCER CARE	mars Medical Advocacy & Referral Service
07506 750023	0300 303 4747	020 7846 2309	020 3322 8586

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All About Chanukah

The Eight Day Festival of Lights

Friday 4 to Saturday 12 December 2026

Kosher Pantry and Shabbat Room Directory 2027



Hospital managers and medical staff
WhatsApp us at any time
0777 256 3441

Families and relatives needing kosher support in hospital
Gezint hotline
0333 613 9625

A Helping Hand, 24 Fairholt Road, London N16 5HW
T: 020 8806 7999 | www.aHelpingHand.org.uk
Registered charity in England & Wales No: 297233

HOSPITAL KOSHER FACILITIES DIRECTORY

Barnet Hospital

Spiritual Care Unit, Level 0.

Basildon University Hospital

Kosher food cabinet. From the main entrance go to the end of the hallway and turn right. Tall cabinet beside the vending machines near the Multi-Faith Prayer Room.

Broomfield Hospital

Faith Centre, Room A209. From Main Reception go to the end of the Atrium, take the lift or stairs to the second floor; on the right. Shabbos meal supplies on request.

Charing Cross Hospital

Chaplaincy Office kosher cabinet and Shabbos room. Enter the main building and walk through the double doors on the right of the lift, to the end. Turn left, then right. It is the last door on the right before the chapel. The code is on the door, or call the Gezint hotline.

Chelsea & Westminster Hospital: A&E

A&E kitchenette. Ask at A&E reception for staff to open it.

Chelsea & Westminster Hospital: Main chaplaincy

Chaplaincy Shabbos room. Main building, first floor, Chaplaincy Meeting Room to the right of the Chapel.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Shabbos room. Pass the Information Desk, turn left to the lifts/stairs, go to the lower ground floor (Floor 1), turn left; first door on the right. Shabbos in a box available on request.

Guy's Hospital

Tower A kosher facility. From the main entrance turn left, first left into Tower A, right after the lifts. Prayer Room on the left; use the left-hand door. (Collect keys from security for entry.)

Homerton University Hospital: Templar Ward (maternity)

Yellow corridor to the second floor; in the patient breakfast area on the right as you enter.

Homerton University Hospital: Starlight Ward (children's ward)

First right from the main entrance. Go up the staircase to the first floor and take a right into Starlight Ward. As you enter the ward, the first door on the left is the Shabbat room.

Homerton University Hospital: Rear portacabin / Ezra Umarpeh room

Rear entrance, follow signs to Ezra Umarpeh and Chatsworth House. The access code is on the door.

Homerton University Hospital: Delivery Suite

Kosher pantry inside the Delivery Suite. As you enter the Delivery Suite, it is on your left side.

King's College Hospital

Cheyne Wing kosher facility. Cheyne Wing main entrance, lifts/stairs to the first floor, turn right then right again towards the Chapel. As you enter the Chapel, it is in the Sanctuary room. The kosher cabinet has a number lock.

North Middlesex University Hospital

A&E kosher pantry. Ask the Band 7 Sister's Office for the key.

Main entrance kosher pantry. Opposite reception beside the vending machine. Ask the Information Desk for the key.

Northwick Park Hospital

Fourth-floor facility. From the fourth-floor main entrance turn left; after Marks & Spencer turn left. On the right near the Jonathan Levy Lecture Theatre. Or turn left opposite Chaplaincy.

Royal Brompton Hospital

Ground-floor kosher cabinet. Follow signs to the Prayer Room; cabinet in the hallway on the right.

Royal Free Hospital: Shabbos room

Lower-ground-floor Shabbos room, next to the Chaplaincy Office.

Royal Free Hospital: A&E

A&E kosher facility, within A&E. The code is on the cabinet door.

Royal Free Hospital: Maternity

Maternity kosher facility. Number-lock access on the kosher pantry.

Royal London Hospital: Jewish Community Room

Jewish Community Room (JCR). Second floor, Multi-Faith Centre. Number-lock access at the door.

Royal London Hospital: A&E

Kosher facilities: ask the matron or nurse for access.

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore

New Stanmore Building, ground floor, behind main reception: kosher pantry, with food on request (Shabbos in a box). For prayer and other facilities, use the multi-faith portacabin across the road, on the right from the New Stanmore Building.

Southend University Hospital

Cardigan Building kosher facility. Second floor, beside the Maternity Ward and Prayer Rooms.

St Bartholomew's Hospital (Barts)

Jewish Community Room (JCRB). Second floor of the Catering Block. (Access after 8pm is restricted; ask security to let you into the building.)

St Mary's Hospital

Enter the Cambridge Wing via the Norfolk Place entrance, turn left; the chaplaincy office is at the very end of the hallway on the right. Open 24 hours.

St Thomas' Hospital

South Wing Prayer Room facility. From the main entrance turn right towards North Wing; at the café turn left, follow signs into South Wing and the Prayer Rooms, near the post room by Central Hall; first room on the left.

UCLH: Tower Building

Ground floor, Chaplaincy Suite. Pass the pharmacy on the right side of the main entrance. First room on the right, by the multi-faith chaplaincy area.

UCLH: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (EGA) Maternity

25 Grafton Way. Third floor: left from the lifts or right from the stairs; through the first double doors, room on the right (in the discharge lounge).

Watford General Hospital

Fifth-floor kosher pantry. Main building, lift to the fifth floor, turn left; pantry is recessed into the wall on the left. If missed, continue towards the second set of lifts. Key in a secured lock: call the hotline.

Whittington Hospital

Shabbos room and kosher pantry. Kenwood Building, Level 4. Follow signs to Celier and Murray Wards. 24-hour access.

Manchester: St Mary's / Children's / MRI / Eye

Main entrance to the Children's Hospital, ground floor hallway. On the left, opposite Children's Outpatients.

Manchester: Salford Royal

Hope Building, 3rd floor, in the chaplaincy department.

Manchester: North Manchester General

Entrance 3. Ground floor, on the main corridor between Block D and Block E.

Manchester: The Christie

Oak Road entrance. Behind the Christie charity shop, through the right corridor (marked staff only).

Manchester: Wythenshawe

Outpatients Entrance 5. In the green zone, opposite the chapel.

Manchester: Fairfield General (Bury)

Entrance 3 or 5. Follow signs to bowel cancer screening, then look for the signs to the Shabbos room.

Under review for new Shabbos rooms in late 2027

Moorfields Eye Hospital and other hospitals coming.

Directions are based on the charity's existing guide and later confirmations. Access may depend on hospital security or ward staff.

Gezint hotline 0333 613 9625