

Pain Management

- Hindus encourage the acceptance of pain and suffering as a part of the consequences of Karma. It is not seen as a punishment, but as a natural consequence of past negative behaviour and is often seen as an opportunity to progress on spirituality.
- This may affect triaging or the monitoring of pain levels as patients may not be forthcoming about pain and may prefer to accept it as a means of progressing spirituality.

However this behaviour may be less prevalent in Australia especially among young patients.

Administration of Medicines

Hindus may use a variety of traditional medicines and remedies including Ayurvedic Medicine, home remedies and spiritual remedies, often in conjunction with the modern allopathic medication. As a discipline, Ayurvedic medication sits alongside Traditional Chinese Medicine in a TGA classification of complementary medicines. Ayurved seeks to maintain a balance between the body's three elemental energies, biological, psychological, and spiritual. Good and bad health is related to the level of balance of these 3 energies.

Medicines with ingredients of Animal Origin

Some medicines may not be suitable for Hindu patients, if they are derived from cows, pigs, or other animals. Health care providers should inform patients about the origins of their proposed medication if it is derived from animals and no suitable synthetic alternative exists. Patients should be encouraged to make informed decisions regarding their treatment.

Informed Consent / Disclosure

For most Hindu patients, full disclosure of their medical conditions and treatment options will enable them to make informed decisions and plan ahead.

Organ & Blood Donation

Hindus support organ & blood donation and transplantation of organs. The decision to donate or receive organs is left with the individual.

End of Life Issues

- The sanctity of life is central to Hindu teachings. Hindus believe that all living beings possess a soul which passes through successive cycles of birth and death.
- Hindus may wish to die at home as this has particular religious significance.
- A Hindu patient may request a Priest to be present or perform certain rituals. These rituals may contain tying a sacred thread around neck or wrist, placing holy water in patient's mouth or placing holy basil leaves in the mouth.
- A Hindu patient may wear beads around their neck which may remain on the body at the time of death. If it is necessary to remove these beads (e.g. surgery) they should be retied around patient's right wrist.
- Patients may wish to read or recite chants and prayers.

Post Mortem / Autopsy

There are no religious objections to post-mortem examinations. Legal reasons, if any, must be fully explained to family members before post-mortem is performed.



A Guide for Health Care Professionals and Pastoral Care Workers



Hindu Council of Australia, Victoria, (HCA) has created this document to assist and inform healthcare professionals, administrative authorities etc. about Hinduism so they can provide appropriate and effective care to their Hindu patients or clients.

Knowledge of and sensitivity towards a Hindu person's religious and cultural background can make their stay more comfortable, reduce stress and therefore assist in speedy recovery.

Who is a Hindu?

The origin of the word Hindu is more geographic than religious. It initially denoted the vast land on the eastern and southern side of the river Indus, then called Sindhu. The first invaders from the West on this soil could not pronounce the word Sindhu and was pronounced as Hindu. Hence the name. Subsequent several Islamic invasions continued the name Hindu. The religion practiced in this part of the world is based on the oldest sacred scriptures of the world call "Ved". The invaders called the inhabitants of this region practicing a Vedic religion as Hindus.

Hinduism is the world's oldest living faith and third largest religion, practiced worldwide. Permanent migration to Australia, belonging to Hindu faith has been from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal as well as Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius, Bali etc.

Due to this huge diversity of people of Hindu background, it is difficult to provide definitive rules and regulations applying to all Hindus. Health care and administrative authorities should consult the patient/client about individual needs for religious observance and practice.

Elders & Visiting Arrangements

- Hindus encourage family members to take an active role in the care of family member & emphasise respect for all older people, with children having a special responsibility of care towards their parents.
- Caring the elderly and sick is considered as a family obligation and should be considered when developing care plans or suggesting nursing or residential care.
- Health care providers should discuss with the patient or their family the impact of visitors may have on rest of the care requirements and other patients.

Astrological Beliefs

- Many Hindus hold strong astrological beliefs and their direct influence on health and wellbeing.
- Some patients may wish to schedule appointments or surgeries on auspicious days.

Prayer and Meditation

- Prayer and meditation are important to Hindus. There are no set times, however, most prefer to pray in the morning.
- Prayer can take place at any location including in bed or in hospital prayer rooms.
- Hindu patients may wish to have religious statues or deities close by when in hospital.

Bathing and Cleanliness

- The concept of purity is important to Hindus and some may be quite meticulous about bathing and cleanliness. Morning prayers are done after bathing and before breakfast.
- A delay in eating to follow this ritual should not be interpreted as a refusal to eat & may have an impact on the timing of medication to be administered.
- Washing of hands prior to eating is important to Hindus as most of them eat with their fingers.
- Elders in the family may have a strong influence on decision making related to health matters, including informed consent.

Dietary Needs

- Many Hindus are strict vegetarians, abstaining from all forms of meat, fish and eggs, but will consume dairy products.
- Some Hindus choose to eat meat and do not follow a vegetarian diet but may refrain from beef or pork as cows are considered sacred and pigs are considered unclean. Some non-vegetarian Hindus may choose to abstain from eating meat on particular days of the week or month.
- Some strict vegetarian Hindus will not eat from plates or use utensils that have previously been used to serve or cook meat.
- Fasting is common for Hindus and can vary from complete abstinence to only avoiding certain types of food or having only one meal in the day.

Contraception

There is no official Hindu position on contraception, abortion or reproductive technologies. The decision should be taken by the patient in consultation with family members.

Maternity Services

- A small number of Hindu ceremonies accompany pregnancy and childbirth, mostly completed in private, or while mother and infant are in hospital care.
- The naming ceremony usually occurs at the infant's home or may be delayed if the infant requires extended hospital care.

Hygiene

- Hindus place a great emphasis on purity, in both physical and spiritual terms. Patients who are washed in bed or who require assistance with washing may have a strong preference for washing to start with the face and proceed towards the feet.
- They may also wish to brush their teeth immediately after waking up from general anaesthesia or surgery.

Clinical Examination & Procedures

- Modesty is an important consideration for Hindu men and women, and patients may prefer to be examined by a health care provider of their own gender. Hindu patients may also wish to have a family member present during a clinical examination or procedure.
- The need for invasive examination needs to be carefully explained, particularly if a same sex clinician cannot be provided.
- Hindu women may wear a sacred thread, ring or gold chain around their necks and Hindu men and boys may wear a sacred thread around their shoulder and chest. The permission of the patient or their family member should be sought before these items are removed during a clinical examination or procedure.

Abortion

Beliefs about abortion may vary depending on cultural or religious interpretations. Many Hindus believe that the moment of contraception makes the rebirth of an individual, which may make abortion unacceptable except in emergencies