



QUICK REFERENCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS INTERACTING WITH HINDU PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

For more complete information on interacting with Hindu patients, please see the complete version of the *Guidelines for Health Care Providers Interacting With Hindu Patients and Their Families*. This *Quick Reference* is meant to assist Health Care Workers in Emergency Situations.

GENERAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hinduism teaches that there is one ultimate reality behind the universe, <i>Brahman</i>. This reality is manifested in the universe as various gods and goddesses, who are worshiped as forms of <i>Brahman</i>. ▪ <i>Vedanta</i> is one of the six major philosophies of Hinduism. <i>Vedanta</i> teaches that man's real nature is divine, and that the aim of human life is to realize divinity through selfless work, devotion to God, control of the inner forces, and discrimination between the real and the unreal. It recognizes that Truth is one and accepts all religions, properly understood, as valid means of realizing the truth. ▪ Religion is a way of life rather than a set of dogmas, and <i>Vedanta</i> places great importance on actually experiencing the truth for oneself. Through spiritual practice Hindus try to establish contact with the divine reality and then manifest that divinity in all their actions. ▪ Many Hindus feel that Western medicine tends to overmedicate the patient, especially in the use of antibiotics, and they may be hesitant to start aggressive treatment. Hindus also may want to use alternative medicine such as Ayurveda and homeopathy.
GENDER ISSUES/ BODY EXPOSURE	Women may want to be examined by a doctor of the same sex.
BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS	Blood transfusions are allowed.
FAMILY ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consult the individual regarding their preferences. Customs may vary from one region of India to another. ▪ Hindus tend to have close extended families and an active social life and may have many visitors. Family members prefer to be involved in the patient's care. ▪ Most Hindus in America speak English well, but some, especially older women, may not be comfortable with English.
DIETARY ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many Hindus are strict vegetarians. Most Hindus do not eat beef or beef products, such as jello. Very orthodox Hindus may also avoid certain vegetables such as onions and garlic. Consult with the patient about his/her dietary practices.
END OF LIFE CARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hindus believe the body is a vehicle for the soul through which it can experience the world and progress in its journey to God. When the body has served its purpose, it is discarded and the soul takes on another body until it finds union with God. Although Hindus believe in preserving the body until its natural end, they recognize that death is a part of life, and that the true self is immortal and does not die when the body dies. ▪ Maintaining a terminal patient on artificial life support for a prolonged period in a

	<p>vegetative state is not encouraged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hindus, because of their religious belief, are more acceptable of natural death, and hence not in favour of artificially prolonging life.
RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Prayer Room for Hindus may be provided. The room should be quiet, clean, and carpeted. An inter-religious space sensitive to the needs of persons of diverse traditions is acceptable. ▪ Some Hindus may practice fasting on certain days. Generally, a sick person can be excused from fasting, but consult the individual.
ORGAN DONATION/RECEIPT OF TISSUE OR ORGANS	Organ transplantation, both donating and receiving, is allowed.
AUTOPSY	Autopsy is permitted.
CARE OF THE DECEASED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hindus practice cremation. Cremation should take place shortly after death, preferably within 24 hours. It is important that the Death Certificate be filled out quickly so that funeral arrangements can be completed. ▪ If the death is subject to investigation by the local Medical Examiner or Coroner, follow established procedures. Be sure to notify the Medical Examiner or Coroner of any special religious beliefs or family requests.
CONTACT INFORMATION & RESOURCES ON THE WEB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indo-American Center 773/973-4444 ▪ Asian Human Services 773/728-2235 ▪ Vivekananda Vedanta Society 773/363-0027 ▪ Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago 630/972-0300 ▪ Hinduism and Medicine—A Guide For Medical Professionals, http://www.angelfire.com/az/ambersukumaran/medicine.html ▪ Vivekananda Vedanta Society web page, http://www.vedantasociety-chicago.org ▪ Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago web page, http://www.ramatemple.org