



QUICK REFERENCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS INTERACTING WITH ZOROASTRIAN/ZARATHUSHTI PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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

GENERAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The majority of Zoroastrians/Zarathushtis are concentrated in India and Iran. Zoroastrians/Zarathushtis may also be identified as <i>Parsis</i>. ▪ Prophet Zarathushtra, or Zoroaster, preached in ancient Persia around 1500 BCE. He preached the monotheistic religion of the One Supreme God, Ahura Mazda (“Wise Lord”). His message is positive, life affirming, and active-principled. Zoroastrianism stresses conscious decisions to choose the righteous path (Asha). A Zoroastrian is taught to lead an industrious, honest and charitable life. Zarathushtra asked his listeners to choose a life of intelligent reflection and active benevolence. Zoroaster’s teachings are embodied in the triad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Humata -- Good Thoughts √ Hukhta -- Good Words √ Huvereshta -- Good Deeds ▪ Traditional patients may wear a white cotton loose shirt (Sudreh) next to the skin and a woolen girdle or cord (Kushti) circling the waist three times. As much as possible, the staff should allow and even encourage the patients to keep this attire on since this will have a soothing positive feeling for the patient’s mind and be helpful in the healing process. The garment can be removed for a short period of time for surgery or procedures with understanding and sensitivity and re-worn as soon as possible. Neither the shirt nor the cord should be cut and disposed of nonchalantly. Cutting or destroying may be permitted if no other way exists as in very serious trauma. Sensitivity to this religious attire is specifically important for emergency department staff that may unknowingly and spontaneously proceed to cut and destroy the garment. The garment should alert the staff that the unaccompanied individual is a Zoroastrian. Hospital personnel who may then approach the local Zoroastrian organization for intervention and proper identification of the individual.
GENDER ISSUES/ BODY EXPOSURE	There is no preference for same-sex care givers.
BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS	There is no specific religious instruction regarding blood transfusions. Check with the patient regarding their preference.
FAMILY ISSUES	It is believed that prayers made/offered in as close a proximity to the sick person as possible are most beneficial, hence, whenever possible, visitors should be permitted for short periods of time (15-30 minutes).
DIETARY ISSUES	Generally there are no religious guidelines hence individual preferences and restrictions (if expressed) may be honored. In general, Zoroastrians are not vegetarians.
END OF LIFE CARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the event of death, prayers at the last breath of life are beneficial. A candle, oil lamp or incense burner lighted by the person’s head is believed to assist the soul leaving the dying body. (A small electric table lamp may be substituted.) Prayers (Ashem Vohu) should be recited by a family member or friend by the dying or dead person’s bedside.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No special religious space is needed. Grieving relatives may wish to utilize a non-denominational quiet room. Having the Sudreh and Kushti worn at the time of death is beneficial to the dying person, hence if not already worn; it should be put on as soon as possible. Sudreh and Kushti should be worn by the person after competing post –mortem care.
ORGAN DONATION/RECEIPT OF TISSUE OR ORGANS	There is no specific religious instruction on organ and tissue donation. Many Zoroastrians in the United States today are inclined towards donation and have expressed desire to donate. The religious practice is that organ and tissue donation should be done as a dying process rather than after death so that the funeral and disposal of the dead body can occur within 24 hours of death. Organ and tissue procurement organizations should be sensitive to this issue and to the religious practices so that swift and quick procurement can be done.
AUTOPSY	No religious instruction exists for autopsy. Hence, this is a personal issue with the family. Most families are well educated and astute so that if the necessity and benefit of autopsy is well explained, most will consider the rationale and agree. This should be done as soon after death so that funeral ceremony and disposition can occur within 24 hours.
CARE OF THE DECEASED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final disposal of the dead body is expected as soon as possible and the funeral ceremony is encouraged to occur within six hours (one gah) if possible but not longer than 24 hours. <u>Funeral Ceremony</u> -- Zoroastrians regard the soul of the dead more important than the physical remains and extensive prayers for the dead are an integral part of Zoroastrian rituals. In India the body, after due reverence, is placed in the “Towers of Silence,” located on hilltops open to the sky and given free access to birds of prey. The bones are bleached and crumble to dust over time. No monument is erected for it is hoped that the departed will live on in the hearts and prayers of their loved ones. In other parts of the world, burial or cremation is the norm.
RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoroastrians do not necessarily have to visit a temple in order to worship -- the universe, Ahura Mazda’s creation, is their temple. Zoroastrians generally worship at home where they maintain a corner with a burning flame for offering prayers. The devout will recite the Avesta five times a day during each of the five watches of the day -- morning at sunrise to mid-day, mid-day to mid-afternoon, mid-afternoon to sunset, sunset to mid-night, and mid-night to breaking of dawn. Recitations are from the Khordeh-Avesta, the daily book of prayers written in the ancient Avestan language. All of the prayers are reverence for Ahura Mazda and His Creation. <u>Navjote (Initiation) Ceremony</u> -- Every Zoroastrian child is officially initiated into the faith with the Navjote ceremony. He or she is invested with the sacred Sudreh and Kushti, accompanied with recitation from the Avesta. The Sudreh is an undershirt of pure white muslin with a small symbolic pocket in front reminding the wearer to fill it every day with Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds. The Kushti, (a woolen cord that circles the waist 3 times) signifies that the wearer has girded him or herself to practice the teachings of Zarathushtra. The Sudreh and Kushti are worn next to the skin day and night.
CONTACT INFORMATION & RESOURCES ON THE WEB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Rohinton M. Rivetna, 630/325-5383 The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), www.fezana.org Zoroastrian Association of Metropolitan Chicago, www.zac-chicago.org