

Asian Indians

Researched

By

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I. Description of culture

- History
 - India has an ancient civilization that dates back to 3000 B.C.
 - Hinduism has been the common thread throughout India's history, dating back to 1500 B.C.
- Demographics in Maine
 - The total Asian Indian population is 1,021.
 - The percentage of the total population is .1%.
 - The percentage of the Asian population is 11%.
- Religion
 - The seven major religions of India are Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism
 - Hinduism is the most common religion in India and is practiced by eighty percent of the population.
 - Hinduism supports the worship of numerous gods and goddesses.
- Food
 - Indian food is created using combinations of complimentary aromatic spices.
 - Indian eating tradition is to eat meals with the right hand only.
- Holidays/Celebrations/Rituals
 - Religious Ceremonies Related to Birth
 - "The Sixth" is performed on the sixth day after birth. The baby's head is shaved.
 - Holy red powder is mixed with water and applied to baby's palms and feet.
 - Baby is not named until the 11th day after birth.
 - Baby is prayed over to protect from evil spirits.
 - Religious Ceremonies Related to Death
 - The men and boys of the family may shave their hair as a symbol of mourning for the dead.
 - Family members are likely to chant, pray and burn incense.
 - After death, only family may touch the body.
 - Person cleaning the body should be the same sex as the deceased.
 - After being cleaned, the body is wrapped in a red cloth.
 - Nine Nights of Dancing is the largest Hindu holiday and celebrates good overcoming evil.
- Clothing
 - Saris are the traditional dress of women.
 - Turbans are the traditional men's headdress.
 - The Bindi is a red dot on the forehead of Hindu women. Traditionally it was a symbol of honor and intelligence. It is now more common for women to wear it as decoration.

II. Family/Relationships/Roles

- Family/Gender roles
 - Multigenerational families often live together.
 - Interdependence is valued over dependence.
 - Men and women each have distinct roles.
 - Traditionally, marriages are arranged.
- Authority/Dependence
 - Women manage the home by keeping all finances, family, and social issues in order.
 - Men have a dominant and authoritative role because they are the primary point of contact with society.

III. Communication

- Language
 - The Indian constitution recognizes fifteen national languages including Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, and Telugu.
 - Spoken language of these national languages includes 1,600 dialects.
 - Hindi is spoken by 40 percent of the Indian population.
 - English is known as the working language for many educated Indians.
- Greetings/Gestures
 - When addressing an Indian, use a courtesy title or a professional title.
 - Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs have different greetings and gestures.
 - Many Indian gestures are different than American gestures.
- Personal space/Touch
 - The large population in India leads to little personal space.
 - Staring at others is culturally acceptable in India.
 - Sharing physical space with others requires careful observation of where ones feet and shoes are located due to feet and shoes being considered unclean.
 - Unclean associations are attributed to shoes and many Indian people do not wear shoes in society or places of worship.

IV. Work/Play

- Caste system
 - Indian society is based on a Hindu caste system.
 - Individuals are born into a caste that determines what type of work they are able to perform.
 - The four castes include the Brahmin (priests & teachers), Ksatriya (warriors & rulers), Vaisya (farmers, merchants, & artisans), and Sudra (laborers). The untouchables, or outcastes, are beneath the caste system and include people whose jobs or habits involve dealing with polluted substances.
 - Play activities are predominately reserved for religious festivals and the "twice born" of India, which includes the Brahmin, Ksatriya, and Vaisya.
- Concept of time
 - In the economic-based cities, schedules follow a Western 9-5 timetable. Rural areas rely on the sun as a guide for when to work.

V. Health/Wellness

- Folk remedies
 - A patient may feel that his or her illness is caused by karma (even though there may be complete understanding of biological causes of illness).
 - The Indian system of medicine is known as Ayurveda, i.e. "knowledge of life" which mixes religion with secular medicine. It involves observation of the patient as well as the patient's natural environment. More than 80% of people in India rely on herbal remedies as the principal means of preventing and curing illnesses.
 - Ayurveda is a holistic system with great emphasis on prevention. Diagnosis is based on finding out the root cause of a disease, which is not always inside the body. To give permanent relief, the root cause has to be removed.
 - The body is comprised of three primary forces termed dosha, which each represent certain bodily activities. The state of equilibrium between the dosha is perceived as a state of health; the state of imbalance is disease.
 - India was one of the first countries to focus on medicinal plants.
- Women's health
 - Girls and women are often neglected due to their lower status.
 - Girls marry and have children at a young age.
 - Women are expected to be passive and stoic during labor.
 - Breast-feeding is practiced and encouraged and can continue from six months to three years.
- Personal hygiene/Sanitation
 - Water is poorly sanitized and lacking in supply.
 - Indoor plumbing is a luxury in India and usually the roadside or street are used for depositing bodily fluids.
 - The left hand in India is reserved for toileting functions.
- Views on Western medicine
 - 55% attributed their disorders to supernatural forces (ghosts, evil spirits, witchcraft) and chose to seek traditional healers before seeking mental health services.
 - In lower SES communities, 80% seek traditional healers rather than physicians.
 - There is a close relationship between modern medicine and traditional healing systems.
 - Family involvement is highly encouraged and considered a prerequisite of mental health care.
 - Predestination makes illness more easily accepted by families.
 - Interdependence is highly stressed, which means more tolerance in a family.
 - Mental Illness is more accepted in the workplace in India. This allows for a person to earn wages and have a more flexible work schedule compared to the U.S.

- Hospitals in India provide major medical intervention for lower caste but often leave personal care to kin, e.g. small place is made available to a family member to cook meals and sleep beside the patient's bed.
- Hospital staff are impatient and not tolerant of lower caste pregnant women's pain during labor.
- "Men have hearts like stone".
- Modesty is highly valued among Indians and patients are decidedly more comfortable and secure with same-sex care providers.

VI. Barriers to healthcare

- Food: Clients from India may be more comfortable eating with their hands.
- Holidays/Celebrations/Rituals: Clients from India may wish to celebrate holidays or perform rituals that are uncommon in the U.S.
- Family/Gender roles: Families from India may be very close-knit and wish to care for each other during times of illness. Men may view women as having lower status and not respect them.
- Authority: Clients from India may see a doctor as an authority figure and automatically agree to anything the doctor suggests.
- Language: Clients from India may speak one of a variety of languages and/or dialects that may not include English.
- Greetings/Gestures: Clients from India may not be familiar with common American greetings and gestures.
- Personal space/Touch: Clients from India may require less personal space and have different views of touch than Americans.
- Work/Play/Caste: Indians from a lower caste may not see play as an important part of life and may also not be accustomed to quality health care.
- Folk remedies: Clients from India may understand that there is a biological cause for their illness but also believe that the illness is caused by consequences from actions in past lives.
- Women's health: Female clients from India may be malnourished, neglected, or unaccustomed to health care.
- Personal hygiene: Clients from India may be unfamiliar with Western toilet usage and regular bathing availability.

VII. Suggestions for healthcare providers

- Religion: Hinduism supports the worship of numerous gods and goddesses, not one.
- Food: Particular diets or special foods may be served to treat certain illnesses.
- Holidays/Celebrations/Rituals: Be aware of the many different rituals surrounding birth and death that may take place. Examples: A baby's head may be shaved six days after birth. Hindu clients prefer to die at home, even more preferably in India.
- Clothing: Clients' reasons for wearing the Bindi may vary and should be assessed.
- Family/Gender roles: The man of the family may be the person who will make health care decisions for the family.
- Language: When arranging for an Indian interpreter, determine which Indian language and dialect the client speaks.
- Gestures: A shake of the head, which signifies "no" to Americans may mean yes.

- Touch: When working with a client who may be in bed, avoid touching feet or shoes.
- Work/Play: Determine a client's work occupation to provide cultural cues as to which caste of Indian society he belongs to.
- Folk remedies: If you are concerned about plants or foods that a family may give to a sick loved one, try to find out what is being treated and what the desired effect is.

Examples of common health problems and specific diet regimens include:

- Fever: Boiled or steamed vegetables, vegetable soup, fruit, and fruit juices.
- Headache: Light foods, cooked vegetables without oil, vegetable juices and soup, fruits like apples, oranges, and mangos, and hot cow milk.
- Common cold: Boiled or steamed vegetables, vegetable soup, fruits, spice teas, herbal teas, and hot drinks. Cold foods, cold drinks, ice cream, sweets, fried foods, milk products like cheese, creams, and yogurt should not be taken.
- Stomachaches: Foods that are easily digestible. Little grains, rice, yogurt or buttermilk, a little salad with a thin dressing of oil or yogurt. Cooked vegetables like squash, zucchini, pumpkin, and mung dal (green beans or pulses) will also help. Fried and spicy foods that contain too much oil are prohibited.
- Diarrhea: Foods that bind the stool such as yogurt, rice, banana, pomegranate, boiled vegetables, and fruits.
- Constipation: Freshly cooked foods, spices like cumin seeds, coriander, tumeric powder to make food easier to digest; whole grain breads, papaya; drinking plenty of water; using oil or ghee (clarified butter) in cooking; avoiding vegetables like cauliflower and broccoli.
- Arthritis: Foods that are easily digestible and do not make wind, or gas. Vegetable juices and soups, juices of carrot, beet root, coconut water or milk and cucumber mixed together. Fruits like apples, orange, grapes, and papaya can be taken. One should avoid eating hot, spicy, and fried foods and avoid too much tea, coffee, and alcohol.

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