



PRIDE IN OUR DIVERSITY

The following information is provided to help you become more aware of your patient and coworkers' views, traditions, and actions. While you can use this information as a guide, keep in mind that all people within a culture are **not** the same. Be sure to ask your patients and their families about specific beliefs, practices, and customs that may be relevant and important during medical treatment and hospitalization.

When describing the Korean culture, the following information could apply to Koreans visiting from Korea, first generation Korean Americans, or ensuing generations of Korean Americans. Each piece of information does not necessarily apply to all Koreans.



general information

- ✓ Expressions in Korean depend to a large degree on gender, age, and social status.
- ✓ In Korea, the art of the pharmacist is one of the oldest and most respected professions.
- ✓ Many Koreans who immigrated came first were students, children of the wealthy elite who could afford to send them abroad for better educational and economic opportunities.
- ✓ One-fourth of the people in Korea are Protestant, although the number in the US is much higher.
- ✓ The spoken Korean is monolithic with no regional variations. It is written in unique Korean characters, though some Korean words originated from Chinese and can be written in Chinese characters. Most second generation Koreans can understand the language, but cannot speak it fluently.

inter-personal relationships

relationship roles

- ✓ Traditionally, Korea is a male-oriented culture, particularly among the older population.

decision-making

- ✓ Koreans are very direct and to the point, but can also be curious and inquisitive.

conflict resolution

- ✓ Many eastern cultures treat problematic situations with a more positive attitude than most Americans.
- ✓ Koreans usually need a purpose or motivation to act and most of their responses are not without cause.
- ✓ In the Far East, the cause of conflict is more often based on real or procured loss, rather than unfulfilled needs as in the United States.

personal & cultural traditions

- ✓ Koreans value their personal space and enjoy their moments of privacy.

gestures

- ✓ During introductions, the senior person is the first to extend a hand.
- ✓ Traditionally, Korea is a male-oriented culture, therefore in Korea a man enters a room first.
- ✓ In many Korean homes, shoes are removed before entering.
- ✓ In Korea, people wait before taking a seat until he or she is assigned to one. Even if one is the guest of honor, one shouldn't assume the seat at the top of the table. When appointed there, one should make an effort to protest, as humility is one of the most valued virtues.

did you know



Although about half of the Koreans own small business, and about a quarter of them are dry cleaning, a reputation that all Koreans are involved in the inner city and that they do not hire local people is undeserved. Only about a tenth of the Korean businesses are in the inner city, and more than three-fourths of their employees come from those neighborhoods.

treatment issues

medical treatment

- v The slightest irregularity or the tiniest spot are taken seriously, especially with women.

emotions

- v Koreans are not overly emotional and any outbursts are rare, especially among men.

food

- v There is little uniformity for religious beliefs in Korea. Individuals can adhere to Buddhism, but follow Confucian or Taoist tenants as well. The main religions are: Shamanism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Taoism. Religion does not usually play a role in dietary matters.

- v The staple and the food of choice for the majority of Koreans is rice.
- v Korean food is very seasonal. In the winter they enjoy hot soups to go with the cold, while in the summer a cold noodle soup would be appropriate.

death

- v Korean culture is very hierarchical, therefore a passing of an older family member is viewed as a solemn event.

g l o s s a r y word	meaning
Kam-sa-ham-ni-da	Thank you
Au-nyong Ha-se-yo	Hello
O-mo-ni	Mother
Ye	Yes
A-nim-ni-da	No
Mul	Water
Chon-man-e Mal-sum-im-ni-da	You're welcome
A-bo-ji	Father
Mani	A lot
Che-song-ham-ni-da	Excuse me
Otoke Chi-ne-go-ke-shim-ni-ka	How are you?
Tang-shin Iru-mun Muwo-shim-ni-ka	What's your name?
Cho-sum-ni-da	Good
Shil-sum-ni-da	Bad
Pu-di	Please

important holidays & dates

Event	Date	Description
New Year	January 1	Marks the first day of the New Year.
Children's Day	May 5	Children's appreciation day.
Memorial Day	June 6	Celebrated in remembrance of those who sacrificed their lives for the good of the nation.
Constitution Day	July 17	Marks the adoption of the Korean Constitution.
Christmas	December 25	Marks the birth of Jesus Christ.
Sollal (Chinese New Year)	Varies Early January to mid February	Celebrates a New Year based on a lunar calendar. In an old tradition each year is celebrated by the animal (i.e., 1998 is the year of the Tiger.)

Sources

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