

Amish

This is intended as a staff reference for use as a starting point for understanding care for those of different cultures. Always talk with your patient and their family to learn about his/her particular beliefs and practices to avoid stereotyping. There can be large variations in beliefs and practices even within a given family. Be respectful of the uniqueness of each person you care for at OSUWMC. See “Resources & References” for sources for this information.

Language: The Amish predominantly use English in medical settings, but some may use Pennsylvania Dutch. At home, they speak a form of German known as Pennsylvania Dutch or Burmese Swiss. Their bible is written in High German.

Spiritual/Religious Practices

- Belief that one must live life purely and free from influences.
- Religious beliefs do not prevent surgery, blood transfusions, anesthesia or dental work.
- Organ transplant is allowed, but not the heart. Children may have a heart transplant at birth (before baptism).

Communication

- **If a phone call is made, it is an emergency. Do not place on hold or try to call back.**
- Most seek permission from the church for health care, because church pays for health services.
- Tell patients about discharge—transportation must be arranged.
- Education usually limited to 8th grade

Food Practices

- Many use kitchen gardens or raise crops. Foods are canned.
- High exercise agrarian lifestyle means few worry about high-fat or high cholesterol foods.
- Food is affected by Amish order. Old Order Amish prefer basic foods- whole grain breads, few sweets, and balanced vegetable protein intake. New Order Amish may shop at local grocery stores.

Family

- Husband and wife share decision making for health.
- If family chooses to refuse treatment, talk about disability. Disability is a greater concern than death.
- High value is placed on child rearing, not economic gain.
- Women wear white head covering when married, black when single.

Health Beliefs

- Define health as someone who has good appetite, looks physically well and is able to do rigorous physical labor.
- Faith healings, herbal remedies. May see chiropractor before medical doctor.
- Use Western med only in emergency. Do not seek preventative treatment or birth control.
- Only want experienced doctors.
- When giving meds, remember they may have trouble keeping things cold.
- Like herbal remedies and vitamins.

Death/Dying

- Death is a chance to “be one” with God. There is refusal for autopsy. Preference is to die at home. Will not refuse home health care for end of life issues. Yet, will be rationed to consider community’s finances.