Asian American Culture

When caring for an Asian American patient, nurses and other healthcare personnel should be aware of cultural differences, in an effort to provide the highest level of culturally competent care. In Asian American culture, direct eye contact is typically avoided, males make most of the decisions, and individuals may avoid saying “no” in order to avoid conflict. In this culture, the theory of illness is largely influenced by the balance of hot and cold, or yin and yang in a person’s diet. Hot and cold do not refer to the temperature of the food being consumed, but rather the level of energy the food provides (cold = low energy, hot = high energy). For this reason, Asian American women eat various soups and rice after giving birth, in an effort to restore balance in the body. Keep in mind that feet are considered dirty in this culture, and should be evaluated last during a physical assessment.



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Avoids Direct Eye Contact

Avoid-sign Direct Eye Contact

Members of the Asian American culture may avoid direct eye contact because it is considered disrespectful. Asian cultures are vastly diverse, yet they have in common the teaching that a person should be modest and humble. Avoiding eye contact should not be considered suspicious, as it often is in American culture.

Conflict Avoidance

Conflict Avoid-sign

Asian Americans may say yes, or nod their head in agreement instead of saying “no”. This behavior conveys respect for authority and is also a general technique to avoid conflict. This is known as conflict avoidance, where they may agree to avoid issues with the authority figure.

Soft Voice Tone

Soft-feather Speech-bubble

Members of this culture may speak in a soft tone of voice. Traditional Asian American patients may look shy, passive, and anxious in therapy. However, they will express their opinions when they feel it is safe and appropriate to speak

Males Make Most Decisions

Male Making D-decision

Asian American males typically make most of the decisions, as they are the dominant gender in this culture.

Feet Considered Dirty

Dirty Feet

In the Asian American culture, feet are considered dirty. During an assessment, the nurse should respect this cultural belief by touching or assessing the patient’s feet last.

Hot-Cold Theory of Illness

Fire-and-Ice Theory of Ill-person

Hot and cold, also called yin and yang, are important concepts in Asian American culture. Hot and cold do not refer to the temperature of the food being consumed, but rather the level of energy the food provides (cold = low energy, hot = high energy). An imbalance of hot and cold can lead to various ailments and illnesses, depending on where the excess or deficiency lies.

Soups and Rice After Birth

Soups and Rice and Newborn

After giving birth, Asian American women may insist on eating various soups, and rice. Traditionally, consuming these foods is believed to restore balance in the body.

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