

# Cambodian Culture - At a Glance

Common cultural norms, values, and traits of the Cambodian population - also referred to as Kampuchean or Khmer.



## Traditional Beliefs on Health and Medicine

- Traditional Khmer attribute illness to natural or supernatural powers.
- Illness may be considered punishment for sins committed in a past life.
- Many believe evil spirits or ancestors cause mental illness.
- Khmer may seek traditional practices before they seek Western medicine, and often hold traditional healing ceremonies in the home.

## Gender

- There is some flexibility in gender roles. Most tasks performed by men are occasionally preformed by women, and vice versa.
- Women are traditionally responsible for a family's money and they engage in small-scale marketing.
- Women often work outside the home.

## Personal Space & Social Gestures

- Sompeah is a gesture of greeting with both palms brought together with fingers pointed upward. The higher the sompeah, the higher the status of the person being greeted.
- It is not polite to make eye contact with elders or superiors.

## Religion

- Most Cambodians are Theravada Buddhists.
- Other Cambodians practice Islam, Cham, Christianity, or animist religions.

## Communication Styles

- Khmer are generally respectful, polite, and speak softly, communicating carefully and indirectly.
- The spokesperson for the family may be the father, or the eldest son or daughter.

## Familial Structure

- Khmer often raise large families with extended family members living together or nearby.
- Men are generally recognized as head of the family with women expected to be caregivers.
- Elders are important in decision-making and often take care of their grandchildren.

## About ECHO

The mission of ECHO is to leverage partnerships to deliver vital health, safety, emergency and civic engagement information to help the ever-changing, diverse population integrate and become successful in our communities.

*The above information was provided by Stratis health and <http://www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Cambodia.html>*

*This information sheet is not intended to be an exhaustive approach or complete representation of the Khmer culture, but rather a basic introduction and foundation.*



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