

Hmong Culture - At a Glance

Common cultural norms, values, and traits of the Hmong population.



BE HEALTHY. BE SAFE. BE READY.

Traditional Beliefs on Health and Medicine

- Hmong beliefs about the causes of illness fall into 3 basic categories: natural causes, spiritual or religious causes, and other causes which include a broad range of types such as curses.
- According to the Hmong belief system, many aches and pains, depression and more serious symptoms of mental illness are caused by having lost souls.
- Many Hmong feel that blood maintains balance in the body and that withdrawing blood will weaken the body.

Gender

- Traditional Hmong usually do not shake hands with women.
- Traditionally, it is considered inappropriate for opposite genders to sit too close to one another when conversing.

Personal Space & Social Gestures

- The handshake may be a new concept to the traditional Hmong person. Handshakes are generally not used.
- Traditional Hmong elders, especially men, do not want strangers to touch their heads, or those of their children, due to religious beliefs and personal values.

Communication Styles

- When talking to a Hmong person, he or she may not look directly at you or engage in eye contact. Traditionally looking directly into the face of a Hmong person or making direct eye contact is considered inappropriate.
- When communicating with a Hmong family, one should always ask for the head of the household which is usually the father and/or oldest male.
- When under pressure some Hmong might say “okay” or “yes” but actually mean “no”.

Religion

- Hmong populations in the U.S. practice traditional Animist Hmong Religion, Shamanism, and Christianity.
- Hmong who practice Animism and Shamanism believe a spiritual world coexists with the physical world.
- Hmong believe in reincarnation.

Familial Structure

- Hmong populations belong to clans. Clans are Hmong family groups, and the clan name is the family name.
- Many Hmong households contain multiple generations living under one roof.
- It is common for Hmong families to care for their elderly at home.

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 the following organizations and individuals: the Hmong Cultural Center, and Stratis Health www.stratishealth.org. This information sheet is not intended to be an exhaustive approach or complete representation of the Hmong culture, but rather a basic introduction and foundation.



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