

As diverse as our nursing population is at VUMC, it is important to understand each of our cultural differences and that of our patients. In honor of Nurses' Week 2010 and VUMC's Nursing Diversity, we will begin a bi-weekly series highlighting different religious groups that are visitors to VUMC.

Week 1: Amish* (sent May 4, 2010)



There are two groups of Amish: Older and Beachy. The Amish live a life-style reflective of their late 17th century European rural heritage. *In order to maintain cultural and religious integrity*, they live in small, independent groups separate from the community-at-large and refuse any form of government financial support, including insurance and social security benefits, and are very conservative in their belief system.

Each community is autonomous. There is no centralized Amish organizational structure. Hard work and a well-balanced diet are an integral part of their belief system. No one is immune from illness. Good health is considered a gift from God and is to be treated as such. Most health-care issues will be taken care of within the community. A physician will be consulted only when there is no other choice.

Nothing in the Amish understanding of the Bible forbids them from using medical technology. However, cost and the aversion to modern technology may be major influences in any hospital-based procedure.

What you as a patient provider should know

When providing patient education, keep in mind that most Amish live in communities with no electricity. Educational materials that utilize videos are not practical. Formal education beyond the 8th grade is discouraged.

Abortion	Unacceptable.
Baptism	Not practiced on infants. Baptism by immersion is for adults only.
Burial	Simplicity in death as in life. Funerals are conducted without eulogy, flowers, or any kind of decoration.
Diet	No restrictions.
Death/Burial Practices	Dependent on custom's of their community.
Drugs, Blood Products, Vaccines	Government-mandated medicines are viewed with suspicion.
Emotional Reactions	Both children and adults are taught to be stoic in the face of any crisis, especially death. Because of their general lifestyle, they may be aloof around and suspicious of the staff.
End of Life/Terminal Care	Death is seen as an entrance into a better life.
Finances	A common fund is maintained within the community for medical expenses. Costs should always be a consideration when scheduling follow-up visits, tests, etc.
Holy Days	Traditional holy days of the Christian heritage.
Modesty	Highly valued. Will be reluctant to discuss personal issues, especially anything related to sex or sexuality.
Photographs	Taking pictures is not allowed based on the prohibition of the Biblical statement in Exodus 20:4, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that...is in the earth..."
Social Hierarchy	Patriarchal. There is a strong respect for and deference to elders. Every person in the community is considered a part of an extended family. All will be equally cared for from birth to death, regardless of their physical or mental condition.
No official position on:	Autopsies, Transplantation/Organ Donation, Reproductive Issues

*Taken from the **VUMC Religious Cultural Manual**, accessible on [www.vanderbiltnursing.com/Quick Links page](http://www.vanderbiltnursing.com/QuickLinks/page) (under employee resources).