

Haiti

Communication

Languages and Dialects

- Official spoken languages: French and Creole
- Understanding one of these languages does not guarantee comprehension of the other.
- Most Haitians speak Haitian Creole as their first language, especially in rural areas.

Greetings

- Handshakes are a common form of greeting.
- Haitian adults may greet friends with kisses on both cheeks.

Names and Titles

- Address a Haitian person with an appropriate title and last name.
- Haitian people often address family members by nicknames.

Conversation

- Some Haitian people tend to speak loudly and gesture with their hands as they talk; however, they may be reserved with healthcare workers.
- To avoid conflict, some patients may signal agreement even when they disagree.
- Haitians often use touch to indicate that they are listening attentively.
- Silence within a conversation can indicate disagreement, disapproval, or disappointment.
- Haitian people may distrust interpreters.

Non-Verbal Signals

- Haitians make brief eye contact with friends and acquaintances; however, they may avoid eye contact with authority figures.
- Prolonged eye contact may be interpreted as rude.
- Pointing at another person is considered rude.
- Haitian people may express disapproval by rolling the eyes, looking to the ceiling, or crossing arms over the chest.

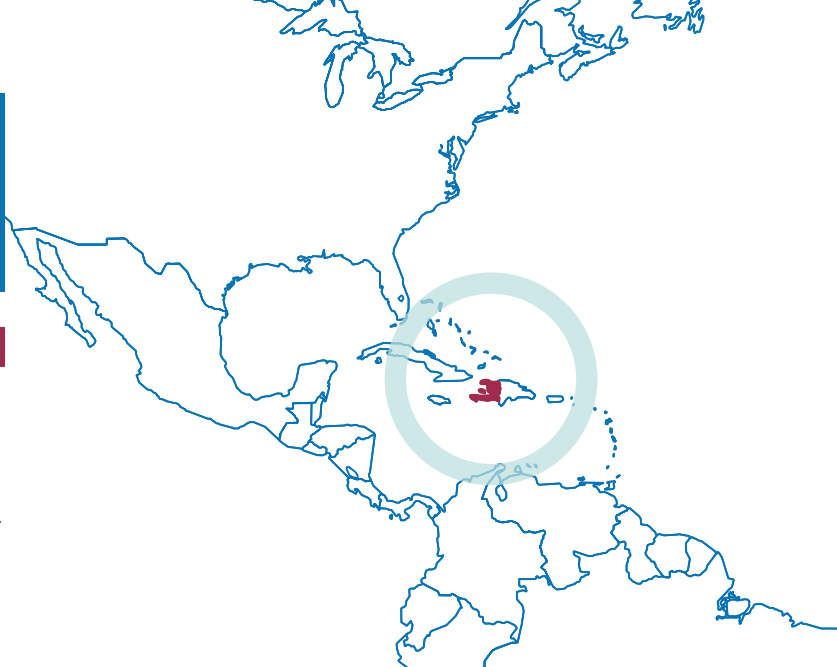
Cultural Norms

Patient and Provider Interaction

- Haitian people do not adhere to standard concepts of time and punctuality – in fact, they consider it rude to be early.
- Haitians expect healthcare professionals to be friendly and attentive to emotional and spiritual issues.

Visiting the Home

- Your hosts may offer a drink or meal. Declining may be viewed as disrespectful.
- Extended families often live together; grandparents often provide care for their grandchildren.
- Haitian families may also be involved in making decisions related to treatment.
- Elders in a Haitian family (age 50 and older) are treated with great respect.



Traditional Ideas and Beliefs About TB

Beliefs About TB

- Perceptions of the severity of tuberculosis vary. Some Haitians describe TB as 'not serious,' while others acknowledge the seriousness of a diagnosis.
- Haitian people may also attribute TB to one or more of the following:
 - Rapid chilling of the body
 - Physical stress
 - Psychological stress
 - Supernatural forces or by magic ('sorcery')
- For some Haitian people, cause of illness may be rooted in one or more of these traditional beliefs:
 - Illness is regarded as a punishment, or as an assault on the body.
 - Illnesses are believed to originate from an imbalance of the hot (cho)/cold (fret) equilibrium within the body.
- As long as a person looks well, they may consider themselves healthy, and may discontinue medications prior to cure.
- Some Haitians believe that God is the ultimate decision maker regarding health, illness, life and death (Si Bondye Vle/God willing). Due to this belief, they may display a passivity towards health decisions.
- Some believe in the power of prayer to heal.

Beliefs About TB Transmission

- Haitians may believe that illnesses of a supernatural origin cannot be transmitted to others.
- Some Haitians may not recognize the difference between latent and active disease.
- In Haiti, latent tuberculosis has been explained as the 'little brother' of the illness itself.
- Some patients may believe that TB can be transmitted in one or more of the following ways:
 - Sharing eating utensils with an infected person;
 - Sharing food with an infected person.

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Stigma and TB

- In Haiti, a fear of contagion may result in a patient being isolated from family and community.
- TB patients may not be permitted to eat with others.
- Family and community members may not speak to a person diagnosed with TB.
- If a patient's TB is thought to be 'supernatural' in origin, then they may be given sympathy and may experience less discrimination.
- Haitian immigrants who are undocumented may not utilize services, especially federally funded resources/services, for fear of deportation.

Common Terms for TB

Some Haitian patients may refer to tebe, teve, or tibèkiloz (all words for tuberculosis) in one or more of the following ways:

- Maladi touse ('tuberculosis')
- Maladi pwatrin ('tuberculosis')
- Maladie de poitrine ('lung disease')
- Malady ti kay ('tuberculosis', referring to the tradition of requiring a TB patient to sleep separately from the family)
- Maladi kèèk ('cough')
- Mò tebe (tuberculosis with a supernatural origin)
- Mo pwatrine (an expedited death caused by TB or HIV/AIDS)
- Grow thin, spit blood ('tuberculosis')

Treatment Considerations

Traditional Beliefs

- An illness may be considered a 'natural' disease (or maladi Bondye, which translates as 'God's illness' or 'disease of the Lord'); natural illnesses are believed to be short-lived.
- A person who believes an illness is 'natural' may be more inclined to use Western medication to treat the condition.
- 'Natural' diseases could include those caused by a microbe, a hot/cold imbalance, malnutrition, overexertion, and maladi Bondye (God's illness).
- Some people believe that 'supernatural' illnesses could only be treated with Vodou medicine.
- If a disease is believed to be caused by a supernatural force (spirits, curses, social taboo violation), conventional medicine may not be considered helpful.
- According to some Haitians, mystical involvement (or an illness of 'supernatural' origins) may be suspected if a person has prolonged symptoms of a cold without an apparent cause.
- Although some Haitians may believe in 'supernatural' causes of disease, they may also have confidence in Western medical treatments.

Medication

- Some Haitians may share medications with others who have similar symptoms.
- Some may acquire medications from Haiti. This may include drugs that have been discontinued or banned in the US, but are still available over the counter in Haiti.
- Some patients will discontinue medication as symptoms subside.
- Patients may take prescribed medication and traditional remedies at the same time. In order to avoid drug interactions, ask about all current medications and herbal treatments.
- If you demonstrate respect for traditional health beliefs, then you may elicit greater cooperation from Haitian patients and their families.

Traditional Remedies

- Spiritual treatments are just as important to traditional Haitian health as are other modalities (for example, medications). Traditional Haitian treatments are usually natural remedies derived from medicinal herbs and various foods.
- Herbal remedies, prayer, massage, Vodou medicine, or a combination of these approaches may be used to treat TB.
- Haitians may first try herbal treatments and other home remedies; they may then consult a practitioner of Vodou medicine; finally, they may consult a Western practitioner.
- Patients in the U.S. may ask people living in Haiti to send them traditional remedies.
- Some traditional medicines are viewed as 'magic'; these remedies are not necessarily tied to the Vodou religion.