

# Ukraine

## COMMUNICATION

### Languages and Dialects

- Official spoken language: Ukrainian (67.5 percent). Many Ukrainians speak a number of dialects which combine languages of five neighboring countries. Also spoken: Russian (29.6 percent).
- Most people from Western Ukraine speak either Ukrainian or a Western Ukrainian dialect as their first language.
- Many people from Eastern Ukraine speak Russian as their first language, although all schooling has been conducted in Ukrainian since 1991 (with the collapse of the Soviet Union).
- A large number of Ukrainians are fluent in both Ukrainian and Russian, although some may not choose to speak Russian.
- In 2018, the Constitutional Court rendered invalid a 2012 law identifying the Russian language as a 'regional language'; therefore, Ukrainian is the country's only official language.
- Educational materials written in English or Russian may not be an effective approach to treatment adherence.

### Greetings

- Handshakes are common in Ukraine, and greetings often include direct eye contact. The person greeting you may repeat your full name.
- Upon meeting, two men may embrace one another briefly, they may also exchange pats on the back.
- Two women may exchange three alternating kisses on the cheek as they greet one another.

### Names and Titles

- Address a Ukrainian person by an appropriate title: Ukrainians use professional titles as appropriate, or they use '*Pan*' for men and '*Pani*' for women.
- Address a Ukrainian person by their entire name as you greet them for the first time.
- Ukrainian names have three parts: first name, patronymic (referring to a person's father's name), and surname. The most common patronymics for men are *-vich* or *-ovich*; for women, it is *-avna*, *-ovna*, or *-ivna* (daughters of a man named Petro would have the patronymic Petrovna; sons would have Petrovich).
- In business relationships, Ukrainians generally refer to one another by the first name followed by the patronymic.

### Non-verbal Signals

- Ukrainian people are not known to smile in public.
- Ukrainians may stand closely together in conversation.
- Speaking loudly may be interpreted as rude.
- Some Ukrainian people may consider it rude to sustain or prolong eye contact; at the same time, Ukrainians may consider those who avoid eye contact to be dishonest.
- Ukrainian people use gestures often as they talk; for example, 'thumbs up' conveys approval or support.
- Point with the entire hand; using one finger may be perceived as rude.
- Making a fist with the thumb between the index and middle fingers is considered offensive.



- Avoid sitting on the floor or the ground; both are considered impolite.
- Avoid walking in grassy areas when in public spaces, especially if flowers are growing nearby.
- If you eat in public without first offering something to others, then you may be considered impolite.

## Cultural Norms

### Patient and Provider Interaction

- Ukraine has a strong tendency toward patriarchy, including traditional gender roles; the thoughts and opinions of men are often valued over those of women.
- Ukrainians may question you on personal matters in an effort to get to know you.
- Patients may have taken several home remedies and over-the-counter medications before finally coming to clinic.
- Some Ukrainians don't pay attention to an illness without symptoms.
- Ukrainian life has been unpredictable and unstable, both historically and in the recent past. Citizens experience increasingly severe weather due to climate issue, and instabilities persist politically and economically. As a result, Ukrainian people have adopted a fatalistic view: a belief that life's events are predetermined, and therefore unavoidable.

### Visiting the Home

- It is customary to give a gift to your hosts.
- Ask if you should remove your shoes before you enter.
- Extended families often live together; grandparents often provide care for their grandchildren.
- Ukrainian people value hospitality, and they take pride in serving the best food in the house to their guests.
- At the table, wait for the eldest guest to begin eating.
- Table manners are important: keep your hands and wrists on the table during a meal.
- If you do not accept all food or drink offered to you, and if you do not try every dish on the table, you may be considered rude.
- Accept any second helpings offered to you. If you refuse, your host may believe you dislike her cooking.
- Some Ukrainian people distrust those who don't drink alcohol.
- Avoid refilling your own glass at the table; instead, wait for your host to do this.

## Facts and Traditional Ideas about TB

### Facts About TB

- In the WHO European Region, Ukraine has the fourth-highest incidence of TB.
- Worldwide, Ukraine has the fifth-highest number of cases of drug-resistant TB.

### Beliefs about TB

Ukrainian patients may believe treatment for TB will require long stretches of isolation from family and society, including a long period of hospitalization. This belief may cause people with TB to avoid diagnosis and treatment.

### Beliefs about TB Transmission

Some Ukrainian people, including patients, may believe that TB could be transmitted via bodily fluids, in addition to being transmitted via airborne droplets.

### Stigma and TB

Stigma and stigmatizing practices continue to exist; however, do not assume all Ukrainian patients and their families will believe the misperceptions listed here.

Persons from Ukraine may experience one or more of the following as a result of a TB diagnosis:

- stress
- a change in self-perception
- fear of isolation or social exile
- fear of job loss

TB is regarded by many as a poor person's disease. In addition, some people, including patients, may view TB as a 'shameful' disease, which may prompt a self-imposed withdrawal from society.

Consequently, some patients may attempt to hide their diagnoses or to stop medical treatment.

Some of these fears may be founded in fact: several types of barriers to diagnosis, treatment, and continuity of care exist in Ukraine. Patients from Ukraine may assume the same barriers exist in the U.S..

- Generally speaking, stigma and discrimination continue to be major barriers to seeking treatment in Ukraine.
- Human rights-related barriers have impacted the ability of those infected with TB to seek care and to maintain treatment protocols; those with HIV/TB co-infections are especially affected.
- Ukrainian patients have experienced disclosure and dissemination of confidential information during treatment, including HIV and TB statuses.
- Although guarantees for job security are in place in the country, those guarantees are not always respected by employers.
- In Ukraine, state policies on drug use and sex work lead to barriers for people in those populations to seek treatment.
- Attitudes among police toward sex workers and people who inject drugs have led to barriers to treatment and prevention services among those populations.

## Common Terms for TB

A Ukrainian person may refer to TB using the following words:

- 'consumption' ('споживання')
- 'phthisis' ('сухоти')

## Treatment Considerations

### Traditional Beliefs

- Ukrainian people perceive everything on earth as alive, and therefore in possession of a spirit; these spirits are known to guide human decision making and behavior.
- Some Ukrainian people believe in the concept of the 'unquiet dead'—people who return after death to be with the living. Rituals and other actions may be performed by the living in an effort to prevent this.
- Ukrainians may believe in the concept of *srok*—a fated period of time a person has to live on earth. Someone who lives a 'normal' life completes their *srok*; one who dies by accident, war, or suicide must complete their *srok* as one of the 'unquiet dead'.

### Medication

- Because bribery is a common and accepted practice in Ukrainian healthcare, people from Ukraine may believe that offering money to providers is the best way to get an earlier surgery or to guarantee a doctor's best work.
- In Ukrainian pharmacies, nearly all medications can be bought without a prescription. Some narcotic medications are excluded from this.
- Many Ukrainian people strongly believe in home remedies, and therefore prefer them to allopathic medicine.
- Some Ukrainians choose traditional remedies because they are less expensive than prescription medication.

### Traditional Remedies

- Ukrainian people will often try home remedies and other curative traditional practices before seeking treatment from the medical establishment.
- One major healing ceremony uses an egg, which is sometimes shaken or rolled over the patient's body. The other common healing ceremony uses melted beeswax combined with water.

### Traditional Healers

- Many people in Ukraine consider themselves healers, and often specialize in a particular mode of healing.
- Traditional healers in Ukraine may use massage, herbal remedies, prayers for spiritual healing, and rituals to remove the 'evil eye'. Traditional healers may even be employed to set broken bones.