

India



Communication

Languages and Dialects

- Official spoken language: Hindi
- English is used to conduct business and to otherwise communicate among countries.

Greetings

- Shake hands only if someone offers their hand.
- Shake with your right hand, which is viewed as the clean hand.
- Among Muslims, men shake hands only with men, and women shake hands only with women.

Names and Titles

- Use titles and last names when addressing Indian people.
- In general, Indian people address only close acquaintances and family members by first name.
- In some parts of India, people do not have surnames. Because of this, some patients may address staff by a title and a first name (for example, 'Doctor John').
- In much of India, a woman's full name will change after marriage: her middle name becomes her husband's first name, and her last name becomes her husband's family name.
- In India, an elderly man is often called 'grandfather' or 'uncle', and an elderly woman could be referred to as 'grandmother' or 'auntie'.

Non-Verbal Signals

- In general, Indian society is conservative about physical contact in a social setting.
- Direct eye contact may be perceived as intrusive.
- A person may shake their head from side to side to mean 'yes.'
- While talking, avoid folding your hands or putting hands in pockets; these may be interpreted as gestures of arrogance.
- Avoid pointing at people; this gesture may be considered rude.

Cultural Norms

Patient and Provider Interaction

- Show respect as you interact with elderly family members.
- Nursing is not considered a professional job in India; therefore, Indian clients may treat nurses and outreach workers with a sense of informality.

Visiting the Home

- Before you enter an Indian household, ask if you should remove your shoes.
- Accept any food or drink that is offered to you.
- Custom will allow a guest to refuse the first offer of refreshments, but then to accept a second or third offer.
- If you do not want to eat what has been offered to you, custom allows you to leave the plate untouched.

Traditional Ideas and Beliefs About TB

Beliefs About TB

Indian people may attribute TB to one or more of the following:

- Smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs
- Drinking cold water during hot and humid weather
- Engaging in sexual activity
- Fatigue or excessive work
- Worry or stress

While the factors above may contribute to the development of TB, or to the transmission of TB, these do not directly cause TB.

Beliefs About TB Transmission

Some Indian people may believe that TB is an inherited disease.

Indian people may also believe TB could be transmitted in one or more of the following ways:

- Sharing eating utensils or clothes with an infected person;
- Sharing food with an infected person;
- Engaging in other ordinary social contact with an infected person.

Stigma and TB

- TB patients may be isolated and rejected by both family and community.
- Indian TB patients may be afraid to disclose a TB diagnosis to their friends or families; patients may give an alias while at the clinic.
- Fear of stigma will sometimes cause an Indian TB patient to discontinue treatment.
- Because some Indians attribute the cause of TB to immoral behaviors, patients may be blamed for acquiring the disease.
- In rural communities, women tend to suffer the effects of stigma more (when compared with men).
- Patients from rural areas may be more likely to lose a job in India, to feel unwelcome at social events, or to experience a loss of respect within the community.

Common Terms for TB

An Indian person may refer to TB using the following words or phrases:

- Motijhara
- Kshya
- Daana
- Worsened typhoid

[>> continued on next page](#)

Treatment Considerations

Traditional Remedies

Some Indian people may believe that TB can only be cured by a return to socially acceptable behavior; this would include adherence to dietary, social, and cultural norms.

Indian people may try home remedies and other traditional curative practices before seeking treatment from the medical establishment. Some believe TB may be cured by treating the symptoms of the disease using alternative remedies.

These practices may include the following:

- Herbs, for example tulsi or jamun;
- Syrups, tablets, medicated oils, or ointments made from plants, animal products, or minerals;
- Diets prescribed by healers, which regulate the quantity or quality of foods;
- Meats, which are considered a 'warm' food that helps to expel sputum;
- Tattooing the wall of the chest with a heated rod or coin;
- Some people believe medicines will be more effective when taken with milk, water, or honey.