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# **Respecting Cultural Beliefs**

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## **What is culture?**

- Culture is the part of each of us that guides our values, beliefs, behavior and our interactions with others
- Our cultural beliefs and practices influence the way we experience important life transitions such as birth, marriage and death

## **What components make up culture?**

Culture includes more than one's race or ethnicity. It includes membership in certain groups or professions that influence our beliefs, values and practices. Examples of these groups include age/generational groups, religion, military, sexual orientation and spirituality.

## **What's important to tell the hospice/palliative care team about your culture?**

- One of the things that can help the team understand you is sharing your life's story, your experiences, and how they may influence the care that you want now
- Let the team know:
  - What language you are most comfortable speaking
  - How you want to be greeted. Some people want to be called by their first names and others want to be called by their last names
  - If you want to make your own decisions about your care, or if you want someone else to do it for you
  - Who should be included when there are discussions about your care
- Tell the team about any practices that are important to your culture and to you, so that we can respect and support your practices. For example:
  - Food: Some groups have special foods that they enjoy together and others have some foods that they cannot eat
  - Religion: Some religions have certain rituals that are important when a person is ill or dying
  - Healthcare: Some groups use herbs or medicines that are common in their culture, especially to help manage pain and other symptoms. It is important that the team is aware of any herbs or medications you

are using so that the medicines they order for you do not cause a problem with what you are already taking

- Death and dying: It is important for the team to understand what is acceptable to you. Please let the team know if you have traditions that are important, such as; care of the body, organ donation, and after-death rituals. Also, let the team know if it is appropriate to talk directly about a person's death or to say the name of the person who has died.

## What can be done to honor and respect your values, practices and beliefs?

- The team can help you:
  - Make sure your plan of care includes what is important to you
  - Contact spiritual, religious, veteran or community leaders that you want involved in your care
  - Share your life story with others important to you
  - Honor your values, practices and beliefs

Other HPNA Teaching Sheets on are available at [www.HPNA.org](http://www.HPNA.org).

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