

**Amish Culture Report**

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### **Objectives**

Cultural and ethnic characteristics greatly influence healthcare. People from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities have different practices and beliefs. Factors that could affect the relationship between the nurse and the client include the nurse's unawareness of the client's religious beliefs. This can cause the relationship to be one-sided due to the nurse failing to recognize the client's beliefs and nonverbal cues. Providing culturally sensitive care in a maternal setting is crucial, because each culture handles childbirth differently. The healthcare team must be supportive by acknowledging and respecting the client's cultural values and beliefs.

### **Description of the Amish culture**

The Amish culture handles pregnancy uniquely different from other cultures. There is not an exact prevalence rate of Amish residents located in Champaign County, however many reside in central Illinois. "The largest Amish community in Illinois lives in Arthur, with an Amish population of 4,700, according to Nolt and the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies" (Snabes, 2020, para 5). The Amish are known for their Christian faith, which emphasizes lucidness, & modesty. "Amish birth practices are characterized by a commitment to simplicity, natural processes, and community involvement" (Timbs, 2023, para 2). The Amish believe in natural home births, and they hold the religious belief that the best way to bring a baby into the world is in the presence of the home. The Amish women have a present midwife throughout the labor and delivery process to provide emotional support and any necessary treatment. The Amish often rely on traditional remedies and are hesitant about modern healthcare. Amish women will often prefer a female provider based on their principles of modesty; however, male providers are allowed to care for Amish women. This decision is ultimately based on the client's preference

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and comfortability. Although many Amish women prefer at home births, some clients do opt to give birth in a hospital setting. “More than 20% of the population does not have health insurance, according to Census data. Local officials say that number is closer to 40%” (Pfleger, 2019, para 3). This is why the Amish rely on their community to contribute to healthcare costs but understand there may be personal out of pocket expenses.

### **Amish religious beliefs related to healthcare**

The religious beliefs that are held regarding the birth process relate to healthcare, as it provides the client with autonomy and assistance with decision-making. The Amish do not believe in taking synthetic pain medication during birth; therefore, they handle pain & suffering by utilizing natural remedies. Additionally, when male babies are born the Amish community does not practice circumcision. “According to an article from Healthline, circumcision is not a typical practice among the Amish community” (Delfs, 2023, para 3). “The majority of Amish men are not circumcised, as it is not a mandatory part of their religious or cultural practices” (Delfs, 2023, para 4). Another unique cultural practice related to the labor and delivery process includes the mother wearing a birthing gown. The gown is specifically used for the client's comfort and easy access to help deliver the baby. "The Amish birthing gown is more than just a piece of clothing – it symbolizes strength and resilience for the mother during childbirth" (Strusnik, 2023, para 11). "From its unique design to its handcrafted details, this garment has been used by generations of mothers for centuries as an emblem of courage and hope" (Strusnik, 2023, para 11). During the postpartum period connecting with the baby, relaxing, rehealing, and restoring the body are of utmost importance. “The Amish value the postpartum period as a time

of rest, reflection, and adjustment, allowing the mother to embrace her role as a caregiver and nurturer" (Timbs, 2023, para 15).

### **Common Structure of The Family**

The common structure of the family in this culture consists of providing support for the mother. The newborn's grandmother tends to the child while the mom rests and heals. "Family and community members offer assistance with household chores, childcare for older siblings, and preparing nourishing meals for the mother" (Timbs, 2023, para 14). The Amish value and cherish the time and help provided by the elderly within the family. Elderly Amish typically live with their children and are well respected. Children work together within their families and seek support from their elderly family members rather than strangers. The Amish are allowed to speak to strangers but are extremely personal and do not consult with strangers. While Amish communities may have specified gender roles, it is not mandatory for husbands to speak for their wives.

### **Communication**

The Amish use normal verbal communication and do not have a problem expressing their feelings to their family members and friends. It is important to pay attention to Amish nonverbal communication. The way the Amish wear their clothes is a way to express their nonverbal communication. The type of hat worn by the men in the Amish community is a representation of their age and marital status. The Amish use gestures such as handshaking and patting someone on the back to say hello or thank you. It is important to watch for raised eyebrows or frowning of the face, which indicates frustration.

### **The Amish Diet**

While food is an essential asset for Amish families, the Amish diet is simple and traditional as it consists of roasted chicken, potatoes, veggies, and casseroles. Amish women do not have any specific cultural traditions regarding diet after birth, however women typically consume fresh fruits, vegetables, and poultry. It is crucial for hospitals to acknowledge culturally specific diet requirements, because not having food available based on the patient's cultural beliefs can make it difficult for them to order food. This can cause malnourishment in patients if the food they normally consume is unavailable.

### **Description of Core Values**

In conclusion, the Amish view childbirth as significant and unforgettable. The Amish value large families, and maintaining close-knit familial and community bonds. Core values regarding the childbearing process of the Amish community include self-sufficiency, which impacts their childbearing experience. A natural at-home birth is critical for Amish women, as they rely on their families to care for the newborn and support the mother's needs. Support within the community is also essential for the Amish. When working with Amish patients it's important that you acknowledge their cultural differences: by respecting their wishes, being attentive to their opinions, and always asking questions if unsure.

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