

Amish Cultural Values:  
Clinical Cultural Report  
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## AMISH CULTURAL VALUES

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The Amish population arose from Switzerland and settled in Pennsylvania in the early 18th century. After the Civil War, many moved to rural areas in search of owning farmland located predominantly in midwestern states, including Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, and Kansas (Katz, Ferketich, Paskett, & Bloomfield, 2013). In central Illinois, the closest Amish community can be found in Arthur, Illinois, which is approximately half an hour from Mattoon and includes about 2,200 residents (ACM, n.d.). They can speak a mixture of languages that include German, English, and Pennsylvania Dutch. Generally, they do not believe in modern technology and do not own automobiles. Instead, their primary transportation method is to drive buggies or walk.

The Amish generally follow conservative family roles, with the men working as farmers or craftsmen, and the women's primary purpose is to care for the young, elderly, and sick (Katz, Ferketich, Paskett, & Bloomfield, 2013). This is especially important since the Amish do not believe in retirement homes, so grandparents often live in the house and respected until they pass on. For this reason, there are usually a lot of people living in one household. The Amish believe in taking care of their own families as well as other Amish families within their community as it strengthens their cultural core values (Katz, Ferketich, Paskett, & Bloomfield, 2013). As you may realize, family, community, and religion are very important in the Amish culture. Amish teachers generally teach the Amish children up until the eighth-grade (Katz, Ferketich, Paskett, & Bloomfield, 2013). It is suspected that high school education is not encouraged due to the fear of them abandoning the traditional cultural values.

The unique culture of the Amish population often leads to the declination of government funding for medical care and similarly deters them from purchasing health coverage insurance. The generalized core values that individuals from the Amish culture tend to follow are: not

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accepting any government funding or health care assistance, placing emphasis on family and the full church community, religion, marrying within the Amish community only, not using birth control methods, and only choosing natural birthing options (Katz, Ferketich, Paskett, & Bloomfield, 2013). However, it is inevitable for individuals of any cultural background to escape health issues. If they end up in the hospital, they incur a lot of debt. Often, they have to turn to trade commodities and accepting reduced monthly payments to keep up with payments for their outstanding medical bills (Katz, Ferketich, Paskett, & Bloomfield, 2013).

The implications of the core values on health care on the childbearing experience means that without the use of birth control methods, the Amish tend to have a bigger family size (Kroening & Zink, 2008). It is not uncommon for one family to have 10-20 children. The natural birthing methods usually occur at home and not in the hospital unless there is a complication. Pain medication, the medication used to induce labor, and medication used to prevent post-partum hemorrhaging are not generally used (Kroening & Zink, 2008). Only as a last resort is hospital treatment usually sought after.

Suggestions for fellow nursing students to use while working with individuals from the Amish culture would include showing respect for their lifestyle, not assuming that everyone who is Amish abides by the same set of rules, and understanding that allowing the patient to be surrounded by their family can aide in their recovery. Showing respect for a patient's culture, instead of placing judgment will allow for the development of a healthy relationship with the patient to establish trust and understanding. They are used to being surrounded by their families, so it is also essential to allow their family to be included in the treatment plans. Lastly, it is critical to realize that generalizations are not specific. It is still necessary to ask the individual

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about their cultural traditions and not assume that everyone from a particular culture abides by the same set of rules.

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