

Cultural Report

Korean Culture

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The most common religions Koreans practice are Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, Shamanism but supports religious freedom. “Confucianism is a political and social philosophy that pervades Korean culture” and many believe and practice these rituals (“South Korea - Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette”, 2019). They believe in a Yin-Yang balance. Yin being the female, negative energy and cold while Yang is the male, positive energy, and hot but the goal is the balance of the two. The hot/cold theory is also a practice Koreans do which requires harmony of their health between the hot and cold. Cold foods are considered poultry, fish, fruits, vegetables. Hot foods include red peppers, spicy soups, red meat, garlic, onion, ginger, coffee, and sweets that are believed to cause a woman preterm labor or abortion. Also, hot and cold doesn’t necessarily refer to the temperature of the food but more so the effects it has on the body itself. Some women don’t take prenatal vitamins as pregnancy is considered “hot” and believe that iron can cause the bones to become hard and make for difficult labor (Clark-Callister, 2016).

A woman’s pregnancy journey begins when an elder family member has a dream about the conception of a child, or “Tae Mong”. (N.A., 2016). When she finds out she is pregnant the first person she tells is her mother-in-law, her husband and then her own mother. There are many foods that are considered “bad” during pregnancy such as the consumption of duck as this could lead the child to have webbed feet, or tofu because it falls apart too easily. The elders of the family predict the gender of the baby if the stomach of the mother is round which means its a girl, or if it’s flat then it’s a boy. So when it is time for birth, the husband will be in a separate room while the mom-to-be is surrounded by her mom, mother-in-law, sisters, and any other

female family member. While in labor, it is uncommon for them to ask for pain meds so most are given a cloth that they bite into as it is expected of them to be silent so all of the energy is focused on 'Chi', natural energy. After birth, the placenta is kept, eventually burned where the ashes are made into a powder and then into a liquid if the child is ever sick. When the family comes home, straw rope is tied above the door frame announcing a birth. Either chili peppers for a boy or charcoal for a girl are wrapped into the rope. The announcement of the newborn is a sign for people to stay away for 20-100 days. It is a time for the mother to heal and for the baby to avoid any infections from people in the most vulnerable time. The mom carries her child "piggyback" so their hearts are aligned rather than carrying them on her hip or in a car seat (N.A., 2016).

When providing culturally competent care to Korean patients, do not make direct eye contact or consider it strange as this is a part of their culture and beliefs, always ask what they prefer or want for their pain or any needs rather than assuming, and follow their cultural guidelines to the best of your ability within your nursing practice. Take into consideration that Korean women are very modest about themselves, especially when it comes to vaginal exams. (Clark-Callister, 2016).

References

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