

TIP SHEET

Respecting Religious Differences in Clinical Practice

You have an important role in making sure that patients' religious identities are respected and integrated into their care.¹ Treat each patient as a unique individual and do not assume that they follow every practice typically associated with their religion. Ask questions and make accommodations to care plans, when possible.

- Ask patients about their diet and anything they do not eat before prescribing a meal plan or a specific eating schedule.
- Some patients may have hesitations about taking medications or vaccinations with certain ingredients. Discuss ingredients in medications and vaccinations with your patients prior to prescribing.
- Some patients may occasionally fast for religious reasons. Work with patients to identify accessible times to take medications or food.
- Some patients may have religious commitments such as prayer times, periods of rest, or religious services that could interfere with planned treatment times. Talk to patients to find ways to work with their schedules.
- Some patients may feel strongly about maintaining modesty by keeping parts of their body (or their entire body) covered. They also may only wish to see a provider of the same gender. It is important to document these preferences and try to accommodate when possible.
- For some patients, it might help to involve family members or religious leaders in decision making. Always get informed consent from the patient before allowing another person to participate in their care.

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29630268/>