

Religions and Dietary Practices

Understanding a little bit about common religious groups in America may be useful.

Christianity: Christians believe Jesus Christ was the son of God and that he died so their sins would be forgiven. Christians may be Catholic or Protestant. There are many subgroups or denominations (such as Baptists, Episcopalians, Evangelicals, Lutherans, Methodists, Mormons, or Presbyterians). Christians may go to church on Saturdays or Sundays. They may read the Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, take communion as a symbol of Christ's sacrifice, and be baptized. Religious leaders may be called priests, ministers, pastors, or deacons.

Judaism: Judaism is divided into Reform, Conservative and Orthodox movements. Jews believe that God gave them laws through Moses and in the Bible, and that these laws should order their lives. Jewish services are held on Friday evenings and sometimes on Saturdays, in synagogues or temples. Some Jewish men wear a yarmulke, or small skullcap, as a sign of their faith. Some Jews follow special dietary restrictions. Dietary restrictions are rules about what and when followers can eat. Jewish people may not do certain things, such as work or drive, on the Sabbath. This lasts from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. Religious leaders are called rabbis.

Islam: Muslims, or followers of Mohammed, believe that Allah (God) wants people to follow the teachings of the prophet Mohammed in the Koran. Many Muslims pray five times a day facing Mecca, the holy city for their religion. Muslims worship at mosques and generally do not drink alcohol. There are other dietary restrictions, too.

Other major world religions include Hinduism, practiced in India and elsewhere. Confucianism is practiced in China and Japan. Buddhism started in Asia but has followers in other parts of the world. Native Americans follow many spiritual traditions throughout North America.

In addition to showing respect for different cultural and religious traditions, be aware of specific practices that affect your work. Many religious beliefs include dietary restrictions. Some examples are listed below:

∇ Many Jewish people eat kosher foods, do not eat pork, and do not eat meat products at the same meal with dairy products. Kosher food is food prepared in accordance with Jewish dietary laws. Respect and follow the resident's practices.

∇ Many Muslims do not eat pork or shellfish. They may not drink alcohol. Muslims may have regular periods of fasting. Fasting means not eating food or eating very little food.

∇ Some Catholics do not eat meat on Fridays during Lent.

∇ Some people are vegetarians. They do not eat any meat for religious, moral, or health reasons.

∇ Some people are vegans. Vegans do not eat any animals or animal products, such as eggs or dairy products.

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