

Customs

Women do not shake hands. Physical contact between grown-up relatives or friends (both males and females), or between the same or opposite sexes, is not a common sight.

Many Vietnamese may greet by bowing slightly to each other, they may join hands.

Breaking a promise can be a serious violation of social expectation for the Vietnamese.

Vietnamese may not take appointment times literally, and will often be late with appointments.

Speaking in a loud tone with excessive gestures is considered rude.

Summoning a person with a hand or finger in the upright position is rude. To summon a person, the entire hand with the fingers facing down is the only appropriate hand signal.

Drugs/Alcohol

Drugs: Women do not smoke. Public drunkenness is a disgrace. The rate of smoking is very high among Vietnamese men.

Alcohol: Alcohol use seems to be increasing among adolescents. Women do not drink.

Religious Practices

About 90% of the population is Buddhist.

Catholicism was introduced to Vietnamese in the late sixteenth century by Portuguese, Spanish and French.

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Vietnamese Culture

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Who are the Vietnamese?

Background

Vietnam is bordered by China to the north, Lao and Cambodia to the west. It occupies the eastern coast of the Southeast Asian peninsula, alongside with mountain and forests. Major cities include Hanoi in the north, Saigon in the South, and Danang in the mid-coast region. Significant French influence in Vietnam started in the seventeenth century. In 1627, a French missionary adapted the Vietnamese language to the Roman alphabet to create a writing style called quoc ngu, which is Vietnamese today.

Medical Practices

Traditionally : Traditional herbal remedies are used such as tonics and massage, and moderation is seen as good for their health. Dermabrasive is used to treat cough, myalgia, headache, nausea, backache, and motion sickness. Cutaneous hematomas are performed in different ways , such as pinching, cupping, and pulling on skin along with rubbing oiled skin with a coin or spoon, to release excessive air. These practices may leave red marks on the skin

Western medicine - Most of the Vietnamese believe that American doctors give them too strong dose of medication, They normally do not take medication as the doctor orders. It is important to explain what is being done and why. The patient may be resistant to surgery and invasive procedures because it is believed to upset the soul and cause the spirit to flee the body.

Family Structure

The family structure is a patriarchal system, as the husband acts as head of the family. The wife normally stays home taking care of the children and housework.

Traditionally, children live with their parents until marriage. Men usually marry between the age of 20-30, and women at 18-25 years of age.

In Vietnam, the family often has two to four generations under one roof. They often help and support each other.

Children

Children are expected to listen and respect their parents without questioning. Vietnamese people value education, and they want the children to do well in school.

Vietnamese parents expect their teens to be obedient and respectful. Adolescents may have to help their parents do housework or babysit younger siblings.

Health

Pregnant women may follow a restriction on their diet to keep the baby small for delivery. She may avoid taking medication to keep her baby healthy.

Less than 50% of Vietnamese mothers begin breastfeeding within hours after giving birth. This is especially true if originally from a rural area. They tend to prefer waiting for a number of days before initiating breastfeeding.

Immediately after birth the mom may follow a strict bed rest and take in warm foods to keep her body from the cold. They do not shower or wash their hair right after birth.



Palpitations, dizziness, faintness, and feelings of panic are referred to as weak heart. Impotence and sexual dysfunction are referred to as a weak kidney. Headaches, malaise, and inability to concentrate are referred to as a weak nervous system. Indigestion is referred to as a weak stomach or liver. They may use different oriental herbal remedies. However, the younger generations are seeking treatment from doctors who use Western medicine. Mental illness is considered shameful, thus is denied among individuals and families. They may not seek proper help or treatment.

Sex is not discussed outside of the home and especially not with children. Pregnant women normally avoid sexual intercourse due to the fear of causing a miscarriage or a fetal abnormality.

HIV/AIDS: The majority of new infections are occurring through sexual transmission

Death

For the Vietnamese, death is a time for mourning and family gathering. The period of mourning lasts for 2 years. Traditionally, people cannot remarry during the mourning period.