

## Sikh Patient Healthcare Provider Guidelines

*The attached guidelines are for medical providers (Doctors, Nurses, etc.). This resource should be provided to your primary healthcare provider upon arrival for medical treatment.*

1. **Explain your articles of faith (see the figure on page 2) and what removal aspects you are or are not comfortable with.** For example (please edit as you see fit for yourself or a family member):
  - a. I cannot cut any hair on my body. If hair removal is a medical necessity **and I have agreed to it after your explanation** as to why it's necessary, remove only what is required for the procedure. Any hair removed from the head or face should be returned to me for disposal.
  - b. I wear a kara (bracelet) and/or kirpan for religious purposes. [If asked to remove: reiterate that these articles of faith do not pose a security risk].
  - c. If removal of my articles of faith is medically necessary for my procedure, please seek permission first. Any removed article of faith should be respectfully placed in a clean, safe place with my personal belongings.
2. **Explain all dietary requirements and restrictions on medications.** In addition to allergies, please share if you are a vegetarian, if you are willing to take any medications or food with animal byproducts, or if you have any requirements around medication and opioids.
3. **As a general rule when obtaining any serious medical care, make sure you have shared your desires for goals of care and complete documentation--**such as Physicians Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST)--with your family (health care proxy) and your healthcare providers so that your wishes for while you are being cared for in the hospital can be followed. This may include your preference/wishes for IV, medications, artificial tube feeding, intubation (breathing with the help of a machine), organ donation, and resuscitation/do-not-resuscitate orders, as well as end of life care including visitations, hospice, and funeral preparation.

The Sikh Coalition encourages you to share this guide with friends and family so that they know where to find it in the event of a COVID-19 medical emergency.



Figure

## SIKH ARTICLES OF FAITH



**KANGA**  
small comb



**KIRPAN**  
religious article  
resembling a knife



**KACHERA**  
slightly longer type  
of underpants



**KARA**  
steel or iron bracelet



**KESH**  
unshorn hair



men must and women  
may wear turbans,  
the traditional head  
covering for Sikhs'  
uncut hair

We know medical providers are dealing with emergency situations related to the recent COVID-19 outbreak, and healthcare professionals (“HP”) will come into contact with patients of all backgrounds as a result. This guide was created to give HPs across the country information about how to provide culturally sensitive care for Sikh patients, including an overview of issues that Sikh patients may face and best practices in responding to those concerns. **This guide is intended for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice. The patient or their family should always be consulted first. If you require additional information or assistance, please email [community@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:community@sikhcoalition.org).**

1. **What are articles of faith and/or clothing that a Sikh may carry?** Sikhism is a monotheistic religion originally founded in South Asia. Members of the Sikh faith also maintain articles of faith (“5Ks”) which are central to the religion. It is important to note that not all Sikhs maintain all of the 5Ks, as it varies based on an individual’s level of observance and whether they have been initiated into the faith through the *amrit sanchar* ceremony. Most Sikhs who maintain their articles of faith do so on their person at all times, in compliance with their faith practice, so it is extremely important that none of the 5Ks are removed from a Sikh patient without consent. If removal is necessary, care providers should reassure the patient that the items will be handled in a respectful manner (i.e. will not be placed on the floor, near anyone’s feet, or tossed in a bag with the patient’s dirty laundry). Additionally, some of the 5Ks may require greater communication when providing patient care, addressed below. The 5Ks include:
  - a. **Kesh:** Uncut hair on any part of the body, which is mandatory for both men and women. Men and some women will wear a turban (*Dastaar*) to cover their uncut hair, while some women use a scarf (*chunni*). The Dastaar or other head-coverings are also articles of faith.
    - i. **Providers Should Know:** Sikhs cannot cut their Kesh, and their heads should remain covered at all times. Removing a Sikh’s turban or scarf in public is akin to a strip search.
    - ii. **Patient Care Notes:** Consider alternative procedures where hair removal would not be necessary. For example, If an endotracheal tube (breathing tube) needs to be secured, recommend one that does not disturb facial hair (e.g. Dale Stabilock ETT Tube holder or Anchorfast OETT holder from Hollister). If alternatives are not available, advise patients or their health care proxy as far in advance as possible of procedures requiring hair removal from any part of their body, so they may make an informed decision as to their medical care, consistent with their individual religious practice. If hair removal is a medical necessity and the patient agrees, remove only what is necessary for the procedure after securing permission. Any hair removed from the head or face should be returned to the patient for disposal.
  - b. **Kirpan:** An object resembling a sword that obligates a Sikh to seek justice and fight oppression. There is no prescribed length, shape, or sharpness for a kirpan in Sikhism;





preference, please locate an interpreter or a family member who may be available to translate. If you require additional support, please contact [community@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:community@sikhcoalition.org) and we can help locate an interpreter.

4. **Can Sikhs donate organs or accept organ/blood/marrow donations?** Organ and marrow donation or blood transfusions are generally acceptable to Sikhs, either to accept or donate. This should be discussed with the patient, as an individual may have personal preferences consistent with their individual religious practice.
5. **Are there important end-of-life care beliefs?** It is customary for relatives and religious community members to visit patients when death is imminent. Though the patient retains the final say, relatives will expect close involvement in end-of-life treatment and decisions. If that is not possible, relatives may also be asked to limit the number visiting and then rotate and take turns. Severely ill Sikhs may be visited by a *granthi* (a person who has studied the Sikh scripture extensively). The *granthi* or family members will read hymns from the scripture and pray with the patient to spiritually prepare him or her for death. Visitors may wish to place written hymns or prayers beside the patient or have digital devices play prayers. After a Sikh has passed away, loved ones may recite sacred hymns together. Due to COVID-19 limitations, a virtual compromise may be acceptable. If you need assistance in locating a community member or *granthi* who can provide this type of support (similar to the way a chaplain might do so), please email [community@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:community@sikhcoalition.org).
6. **What should be done with the body after death?** Upon a Sikh patient's death, the body should be dressed and wrapped in a clean, white cloth. Articles of faith should not be removed, including any hair from the patient or head coverings. If articles of faith were removed for medical procedures, they should be returned and placed with/on the body. The family may not be comfortable with hospital staff washing the body, as the body cleansing is a religious practice for Sikhs and may be done in a manner that [reduces exposure](#) to contagious illnesses. Most Sikhs will not object to a postmortem when necessary. Sikhs normally cremate the body within ten days once it is deceased. Given CDC guidance on COVID-19 patients to funeral homes, families may be present for funeral services in compliance with social distancing guidelines. Sikhs may ask to wait to cremate until all family members have completed their self-isolation period.

For more information, please visit [www.sikhcoalition.org](http://www.sikhcoalition.org) or email [community@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:community@sikhcoalition.org). This document is adapted from the Sikh Coalition's Guide for Healthcare Professionals, to be released in 2020. This adaptation was created along with [a host of other materials](#) in rapid response for COVID-19.



## ਸਿੱਖ ਮਰੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਡਾਕਟਰੀ ਦੇਖਭਾਲ ਮੁਹਈਆ ਕਰਵਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਕੁਝ ਦਿਸ਼ਾ ਨਿਰਦੇਸ਼।

ਇਹ ਦਿਸ਼ਾ ਨਿਰਦੇਸ਼ ਮੈਡੀਕਲ ਦੇਖਭਾਲ ਮੁਹਈਆ ਕਰਵਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਹਨ (ਡਾਕਟਰਾਂ, ਨਰਸਾਂ ਵਗੈਰਾਹ ਲਈ)। ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਲਾਜ ਲਈ ਆਪਣੇ ਪ੍ਰਾਇਮਰੀ ਹੈਲਥ ਕੇਅਰ ਪ੍ਰੋਵਾਇਡਰ (ਡਾਕਟਰ) ਕੋਲ ਜਾਣ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਪੈਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਓਥੇ ਪਹੁੰਚਣ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਸਰੋਤ ਨੂੰ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੇਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

੧. ਆਪਣੇ ਆਰਟੀਕਲਸ ਆਫ ਫੇਥ ਜਾਂ ਕੱਕਾਰਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਵੇ ਅਤੇ ਇਹ ਵੀ ਸਮਝਾਓ ਕਿ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਚੀਜ਼ ਨੂੰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਉਤਾਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ ਅਤੇ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਨੂੰ ਨਹੀਂ। ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ (please edit as you see fit for yourself or a family member):

ੳ. ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਸਰੀਰ ਦੇ ਕੇਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੱਟ ਸਕਦਾ। ਜੇ ਇਲਾਜ ਲਈ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਦਾ ਹਟਾਏ ਜਾਣਾ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਉਸਦੇ ਕਾਰਨ ਨੂੰ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਸਮਝਾਏ ਜਾਣ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਮੈਂ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਸਿਰਫ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹੀ ਹਟਾਇਆ ਜਾਵੇ ਜੋ ਇਲਾਜ ਲਈ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹਨ। ਮੇਰੇ ਸਿਰ ਜਾਨ ਮੂੰਹ ਤੋਂ ਉਤਾਰੇ ਗਏ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਵਾਪਿਸ ਦੇ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਮੈਂ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਸਹੀ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਡਿਸਪੋਜ਼ ਕਰ ਸਕਾਂ।

ਬ. ਮੈਂ ਧਾਰਮਿਕ ਕਾਰਨਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਕੜਾ ਅਤੇ/ਜਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾਨ ਪਾਉਂਦਾ ਹਾਂ। ਮੁੱਜੇ ਉਤਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਾਓ ਕਿ ਇਹ \*ਆਰਟੀਕਲ ਆਫ ਫੇਥ\* ਕਿਸੇ ਕਿਸਮ ਨਾਲ ਸਕਿਉਰਿਟੀ ਲਈ ਖਤਰਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਨ।

ਚ. ਜੇ ਇਲਾਜ ਲਈ ਮੇਰੇ ਆਰਟੀਕਲ ਆਫ ਫੇਥ ਨੂੰ ਉਤਾਰਨਾ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਤੋਂ ਇਜਾਜ਼ਤ ਲਵੋ। ਉਤਾਰੇ ਗਏ ਆਰਟੀਕਲ ਆਫ ਫੇਥ ਨੂੰ ਅਦਬ ਨਾਲ ਇਕ ਸਾਫ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਅਤ ਜਗਾਹ ਤੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਬਾਕੀ ਦੇ ਸਮਾਨ ਨਾਲ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਜਾਵੇ।

੨. ਆਪਣੀ ਖੁਰਾਕ ਦੀਆਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਦਵਾਈਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਪਾਬੰਦੀਆਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਸਮਝਾਓ। ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਅਲਰਜੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਨਾਲ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਦੱਸੋ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸ਼ਾਕਾਹਾਰੀ ਹੋ ਜਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ, ਇਹ ਵੀ ਦੱਸੋ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕੁਛ ਖਾਸ ਦਵਾਈਆਂ ਜਾਂ ਖਾਣ ਦੀਆਂ ਚੀਜ਼ਾਂ ਜੋ ਕਿ ਜਾਨਵਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਕਿੱਸੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਨਾਲ ਬੰਨਿਆ ਹੋਣ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੈ ਸਕਦੇ ਹੋ ਜਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ। ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਖਾਸ ਦਵਾਈ ਜਾਂ ਓਪਿਓਇਡ (opioid) ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਵੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਦੱਸੋ।

੩. ਡਾਕਟਰੀ ਦੇਖਭਾਲ ਲੈਣ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਆਮ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਇਕ ਨਿਯਮ ਵਜੋਂ, ਆਪਣੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਡਾਕਟਰਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਦੇ ਅੰਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਇਛਾਵਾਂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰ ਸਾਂਝੀਆਂ ਕਰੋ। ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਅੰਗਾਂ ਦਾ ਦਾਨ, ਸਾਹ ਰੁੱਕਣ ਤੇ ਮੁੱਢ ਜੀਵਤ ਕਰਨ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਿਰਦੇਸ਼, ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ ਦਾ ਅੰਤ ਹੋਣ ਤੇ ਹੋਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਰਥਨਾਵਾਂ, ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਸਕਾਰ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਿਰਦੇਸ਼ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਸਿੱਖ ਕੋਲਿਸ਼ਨ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਗਾਈਡ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਦੋਸਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਂਝਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਉਤਸਾਹਿਤ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਲੋੜ ਪੈਣ ਤੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਪਤਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਥੇ ਹੈ।

