

JAPANESE ETHNICITY AND BACKGROUND

Communication

The main languages spoken at home in Australia are Japanese and English. But 75% of those who speak a language other than English at home, are proficient in English.

In Japanese culture, harmony and consensus are vital parts of any communication, including interpersonal, professional and governmental interactions.

Japanese make considerable

effort to ensure that they maintain harmony, and may do so by expressing agreement, regardless of the level of comprehension or genuine agreement, or simply by following instructions and recommendations. Japanese health professionals, especially doctors, are highly respected and represent positions of authority and power. Most doctors in Japan are men.

Health related beliefs and practices

The state of health is associated with purity. The notion of purity equally applies to physical aspects such as hygiene and to moral values and behaviour. Individuals' hands are not considered pure, and are washed frequently. Wet towels may be used instead of washing.

Pregnancy

- Alongside prayer, it is believed that stepping over a placenta, adopting a child, warming the body, sharing a bed with a postpartum woman, or eating a postpartum woman's leftover food may help a woman to conceive.
- During pregnancy, 'dark' foods which are considered 'cold' energy are usually avoided (eg. eggplant). Aki no nasu wa hanayome o kuwasweru na (don't let brides eat autumn eggplant) is an old saying.
- Morning sickness is not usually discussed, even within the woman's family.
- Pregnant women are usually advised to abstain from any activities which require concentration. They may believe that epinephrine released at the time of maternal mental stress may harm the foetus.
- Women may not restrict the types of foods they eat. They may not avoid raw fish or stop drinking green tea (despite the risks of bacteria and caffeine), and may not take prenatal vitamins. The importance of following the dietary recommendations for pregnant women should be highlighted.
- According to Japanese tradition, women in their eighth month of pregnancy should reduce their level of physical activity and move to their maternal home for delivery.

Birth

- Childbirth is considered a natural event and is usually drug-free and midwife assisted.
- Women in labour are encouraged to eat, as it is believed that food will provide the strength and energy needed for effective pushing.
- Women are also encouraged not to cry during labour.
- In Japanese culture, Caesarean section is viewed as a great hardship to a woman, but it is considered very important to do what the doctor says.
- Fathers are not usually present during labour.

Population in Australia:
30,778 people

Population in
Queensland: 8,589
people

Population in Brisbane:
3,297 people

Gender ratio: 50.8
males per 100 females

Median age: 33.9 years

AGE	%
0-14	10.2
15-24	15.5
25-44	50.8
45-64	18.5
≥ 65	5.1

Early Japanese settlers worked in the pearling industry in Broome and Thursday Island. A small number also worked in the sugar industry in Queensland.

At the end of World War II, only 74 Japanese nationals and their children were permitted to remain in Australia. Within two years, about 200 Japanese 'war brides' are believed to have entered the country.

Currently, a large number of Japanese students and tourists come to Australia.

The main ancestries are Japanese or have Japanese and Caucasian ancestry.

Most people are followers of Buddhism or Shintoism.

After birth

- In Japan, women stay at their maternal home for up to eight weeks after the baby is born. There a postpartum woman can rest, recuperate, and learn how to take care of the infant.
- Infants are usually cared for by the mother of a postpartum woman. This should be kept in mind as Japanese women in Australia may not have access to this support system.
- In Japan, showering or washing hair is prohibited until seven days after birth (including in hospitals). Postpartum women should be informed that in Australia showering after birth is recommended, but it is the woman's choice.

Infant care

- Bathing the infant is acceptable.
- Nappies are changed whenever they are wet or soiled.

Infant feeding

- Breastfeeding in contemporary Japan is no longer as widespread or as prolonged as it was in the past. Japanese women who breastfeed their infants are in the minority. In Queensland, the majority of Japanese-born women breastfeed their infants.
- Breast massage is practiced by some women to increase lactation.
- Breastfeeding outside the home, even in mothers' care rooms, is still considered embarrassing and shameful, so very few women feed their infants outside the home.
- Japanese women may be concerned with gaining weight during their pregnancy and postpartum period. They may restrict their diets and subsequently, may be unable to produce enough milk to feed their infant.
- Formulas are usually introduced at two or three months.
- Of the 254 Japanese-born women who delivered in Queensland Health facilities in 2006, at the time of discharge, 85% (215) exclusively breastfed, 10% (25) breastfed and formula fed and 5% (14) exclusively formula fed.

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