

The Diversity of South Asia

South Asians in the US:

- The states with the greatest numbers of resident Indian Americans are: Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and California
- Bangladeshi Americans are most populous in New York and New Jersey, Texas, California, and Washington D.C.

Chicago Resources for South Asian Patients:

- Asian Human Resources: mental health counseling, health education, language services, legal service, employment services, and a charter school
- Apna Ghar: domestic violence shelter, and family visitation services
- SAWNET: South Asian women's network
- Khuli Zaban: South Asian lesbian and bisexual women's Midwest network

South Asia includes:

- Pakistan
- India
- Nepal
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Sri Lanka
- Maldiv Islands

What is an NRI?

A non-resident Indian (NRI) is an Indian citizen who has migrated to another country. Other terms with the same meaning are (somewhat self-deprecating in context) desis, overseas Indian and expatriate Indian. For tax and other official purpose the government of India considers any Indian national away from India for more than 180 days in a year an NRI. In common usage, this often includes Indian born individuals who have taken the citizenship of other countries.



Ayurvedic Medicine

- Ancient Indus civilizations practiced Ayurvedic medicine anywhere from five to ten thousand years ago. Most of our knowledge of this medicine comes from texts written relatively recently: *Ashtang Hrdayam* (1500 BC), *Caraka Samhita* (500 BC), and *Sushrut Samhita* (500 BC)². Most knowledge passed orally in Indian civilizations and many texts of India's antiquity were written centuries later. These texts laid the foundation for Ayurvedic medicine that has since been incorporated into the lives of Indians.
- Pure Ayurvedic thought portrays a human as a composite of the basic five elements; three doshas, seven dhatus, and numerous srotas. Doshas are described as biological energies, dhatus as tissues, and srotas as channels.
- Allopathic medicine sees the human body as the collaboration of different body systems, which in turn are a collaboration of the organs in that system. Similarly, Ayurvedic medicine sees the human body as a composite of the three doshas functioning through a system of dhatus connected by srotas of differing sizes.
- Any Ayurvedic physician diagnosing a patient would use the three doshas to characterize the disease, and the dhatus and srotas to determine the site of disease.
- Patients are classified by body types, or prakriti, which are determined by proportions of the three doshas. Illness and disease are considered to be a matter of imbalance in the doshas. Treatment is aimed at restoring harmony or balance to the mind-body system.
- The Ayurvedic medicinal system emphasizes the power of the mind in influencing our body. Both mind and body are thought of as a complementary system. Disease is therefore characterized as a disorder of the mind and body, or can be understood as an imbalance in the mind-body system. Ayurvedic principles are thus set to maintain this proper balance. Since it is believed that each mind manifests itself uniquely, all ailments must be specific for an individual.
- Ayurvedic treatments in the West are primarily massage, and dietary and herbal advice, due to the strong regulations surrounding medical practice in Europe and America.

What is the bindi?

Bindi, meaning "dot," in Hindi is traditionally worn on the forehead of Hindu women— it is believed to protect women and their husbands. It symbolizes the opening of their spiritual third eye. In addition, it is also associated with Yoga and Ayurvedic principles. Since the most important chakra is considered to be the one between the eyebrows, the bindi is thought to prevent the loss of energy there. It is usually a red dot made with vermilion. Currently the bindi has become a decorative item and is worn by unmarried as well as non-Hindu women. It is no longer restricted in color or shape. Self-adhesive bindis made from felt in various designs and colors are now available.