

- What are the most important results you hope to receive from your child's treatment?
- What do you fear most about your child's sickness?

A model for learning about health traditions that differ from the Western, or modern, health care system is based on three dimensions:

1. What are the physical aspects of caring for the body (e.g., are there special clothes, foods, medicines)?
2. What are the mental parts of caring for health (e.g., feelings, attitudes, rituals, actions)?
3. What are the spiritual aspects of health (e.g., who I am, spiritual customs, prayers, healers)?

For each of these dimensions, one must consider the cultural traditions used to maintain health, protect health, and restore health ([Spector, 2009](#)).

## Health Beliefs

The beliefs related to the causes of illness and the maintenance of health are integral parts of a family's cultural heritage. Often related to religious beliefs, they influence the way families cope with health problems and respond to health care providers. Predominant among most cultures are beliefs related to natural forces, supernatural forces, and an imbalance between forces.

### Natural and Supernatural Forces

The most common natural forces blamed for ill health if the body is not adequately protected are cold air entering the body and impurities in the air. For example, a Chinese parent may overdress an infant in an effort to keep cold wind from entering the child's body. The innate energy, chi, is an example of this. A lack of chi is believed to cause fatigue and a variety of ailments. Alternatively, some cultures view supernatural forces as a cause of illness, especially illnesses that cannot be explained by other means.