

Engaging Your Sikh Community

Market Expansion Through Cultural Understanding



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Culturally Responsive Strategies for Community Pharmacies

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CPEsn USA

Program Objectives

- Summarize the history of Sikh American communities in the United States.
- Review strategies for pharmacies to better engage Sikh employees and patients.
- Identify key stakeholders committed to advancing Sikh community health.
- Recognize and debunk common stereotypes.

Setting the Stage

- Your pharmacy is near a gurdwara but Sikh families are not using your services.
- What steps can build trust, relevance, and long-term relationships?
- Cultural humility + consistent outreach = community connection.

History of Sikhs in America

- First Sikh immigrants arrived in the late 1800s, many settling in California.
- Early communities worked in agriculture, railroads, and lumber mills.
- Immigration reforms in 1965 expanded migration from Punjab.
- Today Sikhs are a diverse, multigenerational American population.

Understanding Sikh Identity

- Many Sikhs maintain the Five Ks: Kesh, Kara, Kanga, Kirpan, Kachera.
- Turbans and uncut hair are articles of faith, not fashion.
- Respect for equality, service, and community are core values.

Engagement

Employees, Patients, Community Stakeholders

Creating a business proposition around a niche market



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Engaging Sikh Employees

- Provide inclusive dress code accommodations for turbans and beards.
- Offer flexibility for major observances such as Vaisakhi.
- Create space for open dialogue about cultural or religious needs.

Engaging Sikh Patients – Communication

- Avoid assumptions about language; many speak English fluently.
- Punjabi or Hindi materials may still be helpful for elders.
- Build trust through respectful curiosity and listening.

Engaging Sikh Patients – Care Considerations

- Some patients may prefer same-gender care when possible.
- Offer private or semi-private immunization areas.
- Ask permission before physical contact.

OTC & Front-End Opportunities

- Highlight vegetarian-friendly supplements.
- Stock products aligned with family-centered wellness.
- Seasonal cultural displays during Vaisakhi build visibility.

Articles of Faith

- Turbans, uncut hair, and kara bracelets are sacred.
- They are expressions of commitment and identity.
- Treat them with professionalism and respect.

OTC Display Planogram



Major Sikh Observances

Vaisakhi

- Harvest festival and anniversary of the formation of the Khalsa (1699).
Marks renewal, commitment, and community pride.
- Often includes prayer services, music, and community meals.
- Meals are open to everyone and often vegetarian. Food may be carbohydrate rich.
- A simple greeting: "Happy Vaisakhi" is warmly received.

Pharmacy impact:

Large gatherings, travel, celebration meals, community events → remind patients about refills and chronic medications beforehand. Use opportunities for supportive nutrition education.

Scheduling

Usually **April 13 or 14** (solar-based, very consistent year to year).



Other Sikh Celebrations

Bandhi Chhor Divas

Celebrates liberation and justice; coincides with Diwali. Homes and gurdwaras illuminated; families gather.

Pharmacy impact:

Sweets, late evenings, travel → opportunity for diabetes & heart health touchpoints.

^{July}
17 **October or November**, based on lunar calendar → moves each year.



Hola Mohalla

Festival emphasizing strength, resilience, and service. Includes martial arts, outdoor activity, and community meals.

Pharmacy impact:

More physical activity → hydration, minor injuries, pain relief.

^{July}
17 Usually in **March**, following Holi. May vary slightly.



Engagement

Community Stakeholders

Networking - Going outside your comfort zone



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Community Stakeholders

- Gurdwaras are central community hubs.
- Leaders include the Granthi and gurdwara committees.
- Health fairs and education events create partnership pathways.

Outreach Ideas

- Offer BP, diabetes, and immunization education at festivals.
- Sponsor community meals (langar) or volunteer days.
- Invite leaders to visit and tour the pharmacy.

Avoiding, Debunking, Demystifying **Stereotypes**



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Common Stereotypes

- Not all Sikhs are immigrants.
- Not all people wearing turbans are Muslim.
- Sikh Americans represent many professions and backgrounds.

Debunking Builds Trust

- Education reduces fear and misunderstanding.
- Visible inclusion signals safety.
- Trust leads to loyalty and improved health outcomes.

Key Takeaway

- Meet people where they are.
- Honor faith, culture, and individuality.
- Community connection grows both health and business.