

Paganism

1. Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The title “Pagan” describes a variety of inter-related traditions rather than one group. These include: Wiccans, Druids, Shamans, Sacred Ecologists, Odinists, Heathens and many who simply self-identify as Pagan. Its roots are in the pre-Christian religions of Europe and it has re-emerged and grown rapidly since the 1950s. Pagans are usually supportive of other life-affirming religious beliefs.
2. Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English.
3. Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paganism emphasizes relationship with the universe’s elemental forces and the well-being of the devotee. Truths are often conveyed through myth or symbol rather than in doctrines. Human beings are seen as part of nature along with animals, trees, stones, plants etc. Pagans understand deity to be shown in nature, finding expression in Gods and Goddesses and in the natural cycles of birth, growth and death. Many Pagans believe in reincarnation, viewing death as a transition between forms of existence.
4. Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paganism celebrates life so birth is viewed as sacred and empowering. Pagan women are likely to want to make their own informed decisions about prenatal and neonatal care. Women’s control over their own bodies is emphasised and so ethical issues are seen as a personal matter for a woman, who is to be supported in the choices she makes.



5. Prayer & Customs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of Pagan ritual is to make contact with the Divine in the natural world; consequently, worship often takes place outside in woods or standing stones, or on hilltops and seashores. In circumstances where outdoor worship is not possible, natural objects (twigs, plants, flowers, stones, feathers etc.) and representations of the elements (candles, incense, water) assist in the creation of atmosphere. Observance of festivals is important and those in hospital will probably want to observe them in some form. As there are diverse traditions it will be helpful to ask people what requirements they have. They may pray through meditation, chanting, music, dance, poetry, drama and sharing food and drink.
6. Diet & Fasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For ethical reasons most Pagans prefer organic foods and free-range livestock. Many are vegetarian or vegan. There are no organized fast days but some Pagans may choose to fast as part of their personal observance.
7. Clothing & Washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No particular requirements.
8. Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most Pagans will inform healthcare staff of any particular needs that they have. Most will have no objection to blood transfusions or organ reception.
9. Care of the Dying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pagans often see death as a normal part of life and will want to know when they are dying in order to be able to prepare themselves for the transition in life that they believe it brings.
10. Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normally no objections to organ donation or post mortems. Normally no specific requirements with regard to treatment of the body. Confirm wishes with the individual, if possible, family if not.
11. Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The chaplaincy department has a local contact for obtaining further advice and support.

