



## Caring for the Christian Scientist Patient

**The Church of Christ, Scientist, was founded in 1879 by Mary Baker Eddy from New Hampshire, USA. She herself suffered from a great deal of ill health, and believed that she experienced personal healing after reading of the healing power of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament.**

In 1875 she published her textbook now known as "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures". This book, and the Bible, are central to the practice of the Christian Science faith.

To most people the faith is best known for its teaching about reliance on prayer alone for the healing of sickness and disease. When someone joins the Christian Science Church it is understood that there will be reliance on God for healing, rather than on medicines or surgery. There are over 200 Christian Science congregations in the UK.

Christian Scientists will not normally be treated in a hospital, but will seek treatment in a Christian Science Nursing Home, However, they may be admitted to hospital as a result of an accident or because of family and legal pressures. **They will undergo medical treatment during pregnancy and allow medical treatment for their children in accordance with UK law.**

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

If he/she is in hospital voluntarily the Christian Scientist is likely to accept conventional medical treatment although he/she may request that therapy, including drug therapy, is kept to a minimum.

Christian Scientists who are not in hospital voluntarily - e.g. they are there because they have suffered an accident - would often wish to be free from medical treatment. They will usually wish to contact a Christian Science practitioner to ask for treatment through prayer, and they will appreciate privacy for such treatment. They may request that transfer to a Christian Science Nursing home be effected as soon as possible.

**DIET** - There are no special dietary considerations. Alcohol is forbidden.

**BLOOD TRANSFUSION** - The Christian Scientist would have no objection to blood transfusion as such. However, they would regard it as a material method of treatment, and therefore in conflict with their reliance on spiritual means of healing alone. They would therefore not normally wish to be either a donor or a recipient.

**CHILDREN** - In accordance with the children's Act of 1989, parents would not object to a blood transfusion for their child, if doctors considered it essential.

**PRAYER**

Access to the Bible and Christian Science published works would be appreciated. Privacy – simply by closing the curtains - would be helpful for prayer and reading.

**AS DEATH APPROACHES**

Christian Science is kept free from ritual and there are no last rites. The presence of a Christian Science practitioner may be appreciated and the family should know how to contact an appropriate person.

**LAST OFFICES**

Last Offices should be performed as normal. Christian Scientists would prefer the body of a female to be handled by a female. Post-mortems would not be acceptable unless required by law. Organ donation would usually be prohibited. Cremation is usually chosen in preference to burial.

**EVERY CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST PATIENT IS AN INDIVIDUAL AND PRACTICE MAY VARY**