

American Association of Naturopathic Physicians

About Naturopathic Medicine

Licensed Naturopathic Doctors are **experts in natural medicine**. Naturopathic medicine is a distinct primary health care profession that emphasizes prevention, treatment, and optimal health through the use of therapeutic methods and substances that encourage and promote the human body's inherent, intelligent self-healing process. The practice of naturopathic medicine combines the wisdom of nature with the rigors of modern science and evidence-based research.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Six fundamental principles form the foundation of naturopathic medical practice:

1. **The Healing Power of Nature (Vis Medicatrix Naturae):** Naturopathic medicine recognizes the body has an inherent self-healing process that is ordered and intelligent. Licensed Naturopathic Doctors act to identify and remove obstacles to healing and recovery and to facilitate and augment each individual's inherent self-healing process.
2. **Identify and Treat the Causes (Tolle Causam):** The Naturopathic Doctor seeks to identify and remove the underlying causes of illness rather than to merely eliminate or suppress symptoms.
3. **First Do No Harm (Primum Non Nocere):** Naturopathic Doctors follow three guidelines to avoid harming the patient:
 - a. Utilize methods and medicinal substances which minimize the risk of harmful side effects, using the least force necessary to diagnose and treat;
 - b. When possible, avoid the harmful suppression of symptoms; and
 - c. Acknowledge, respect, and promote each individual's self-healing process.
4. **Doctor as Teacher (Docere):** Naturopathic Doctors educate their patients and encourage self-responsibility for health. They also recognize, employ, and explore the therapeutic potential of the doctor-patient relationship.
5. **Treat the Whole Person:** Naturopathic Doctors treat each patient by taking into account individual physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, social, and other factors. Since total health also includes spiritual health, naturopathic doctors encourage individuals to pursue their personal spiritual development.
6. **Prevention:** Naturopathic Doctors emphasize the prevention of disease by assessing risk factors, heredity, and susceptibility to disease, and by making appropriate interventions in partnership with their patients to prevent illness.

FOCUS OF TREATMENT

Licensed Naturopathic Doctors focus on overall patient wellness and empowerment. They perform physical examinations, take thorough health histories, and order lab tests, imaging procedures, and other diagnostic tests. They then analyze the information gathered, educate patients about why they are unwell, and provide patients with the appropriate tools for achieving optimal health. Naturopathic Doctors are trained to perform minor surgical procedures, such as removal of a cyst or stitching up a superficial wound, but they do not perform major surgery. Naturopathic Doctors treat all medical conditions and can provide both individual and family health care. Commonly treated ailments include:

- heart disease
- obesity
- cancer
- allergies and respiratory conditions
- digestive issues
- chronic pain
- fibromyalgia
- hormonal imbalances
- fertility problems
- menopause
- adrenal fatigue
- chronic fatigue syndrome

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In practice, licensed Naturopathic Doctors make referrals to specialists for additional testing or treatment when necessary and collaborate with other medical professionals to ensure each patient receives the most customized, most effective, and safest treatment possible. The result is a comprehensive, patient-centered approach that provides the most appropriate treatment for an individual's needs and maximizes patient choice while empowering patients to be accountable for their own wellness.

NATUROPATHIC EDUCATION

Licensed Naturopathic Doctors attend four-year, graduate level programs at institutions recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and accredited by the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME). CNME is the **only** national accrediting agency for programs leading to the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine (ND or NMD) or Doctor of Naturopathy (ND) degree that is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. Naturopathic medical schools provide much of the same foundational coursework as conventional medical schools, plus additional extensive education unique to a naturopathic treatment approach emphasizing disease prevention and wellness. Students and graduates of CNME-accredited naturopathic colleges and programs are eligible to apply and sit for the Naturopathic Physician Licensing Examinations (NPLEX) national licensing exam. If they achieve a passing score, they are generally eligible for state and provincial licensure in the U.S. and Canada so long as they meet all of a jurisdiction's regulatory requirements as well as annual continuing medical education course requirements. Additionally, many Naturopathic Doctors receive certification in disciplines such as midwifery, acupuncture, Oriental medicine, cancer treatment, and environmental medicine.

PRACTICE MODALITIES

The practice of naturopathic medicine includes many diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, including:

***Clinical Nutrition.** Naturopathic Doctors understand that diet is the basis for health. Adopting a healthy appropriate diet is often the first step towards correcting health problems. Naturopathic Doctors may use specific individualized diets, fasting, and nutritional supplements with patients.

***Botanical Medicine.** Plants have powerful healing properties. Many pharmaceutical drugs have their origins in plant substances. Naturopathic Doctors use plant substances in a variety of forms for their healing effects and nutritional value.

***Oriental Medicine.** Naturopathic Doctors are trained in the fundamentals of oriental medicine and diagnosis. They may use acupressure and Chinese herbal medicine to promote healing. With additional training, they may also perform acupuncture.

***Natural Childbirth.** With additional specialty training, Naturopathic Doctors provide natural childbirth care. They offer prenatal and postnatal care using established, appropriate diagnostic and treatment techniques.

***Lifestyle Counseling and Stress Management.** Mental attitudes and emotional states can be important elements in healing and treating disease. Naturopathic Doctors are trained in counseling, stress management, hypnotherapy, and biofeedback. They also address environmental and lifestyle factors that affect patient health.

***Homeopathic Medicine.** Homeopathic medicines are very small doses of natural substances that stimulate the body's self-healing response without harmful side effects. Naturopathic Doctors have expertise in drug/herb/nutrient interactions.

***Physical Medicine.** Naturopathic medicine includes methods of therapeutic manipulation for muscles and bones. Naturopathic Doctors also employ therapeutic exercise, massage, hydrotherapy, bio-electrical therapies, ultrasound, and applications of heat and cold.

***Minor Office Procedures.** Naturopathic Doctors perform minor surgery in-office, including repair of superficial wounds and removal of foreign bodies, warts, and cysts with local anesthesia.

Naturopathic Doctors work in private practice or in integrated settings alongside other medical providers such as medical doctors, osteopathic physicians and chiropractic physicians. Other Naturopathic Doctors work as teachers, writers, researchers and on the administrative side of naturopathic medicine.