

Naturopathic Care

What is Naturopathic Medicine?

Naturopathic medicine is a system of healthcare—an art, science, philosophy and practice of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of illness. Naturopathic medicine is defined by the principles that underlie and determine its practice rather than by the substances used. Naturopathic medicine is natural, effective holistic medicine.

What is a Naturopathic Physician?

Naturopathic physicians (NDs) are licensed healthcare providers who have undergone rigorous professional training at an accredited school of naturopathic medicine. They are trained to provide primary care and/or specialty care. A naturopathic physician's diagnostic and therapeutic techniques include both modern and traditional modalities. Naturopathic methods incorporate the scientific and empiric, and therapies range from the most fundamental (“nature cure” and “food as medicine”) to conventional medical treatments.

Infused in this practice is a profound respect for the art of medicine, reverence for the wisdom of nature and application of the latest scientific research, all applied to promote optimal patient outcomes. While other providers may use techniques and treatments similar to those used by naturopaths, only NDs licensed by the state in which they practice are able to use the term “naturopathic” in representing themselves to the public.

The Guiding Principles of Naturopathic Medicine?

The Healing Power of Nature: This is the self-organizing and healing process inherent in all living systems. Naturopathic medicine recognizes this healing process to be ordered and intelligent. It is the naturopathic physician's role to support, facilitate and augment this process by identifying and removing obstacles to health and recovery, and by supporting the creation of a healthy internal and external environment.

First Do No Harm: Naturopathic physicians utilize methods and medicinal substances that minimize the risk of harmful effects, and apply the least possible force or intervention necessary to diagnose illness and restore health. Naturopathic physicians recognize and respect all medicines as having a valuable role in healing and prevention when used with the right patient, at the right time, and in the appropriate dose. Whenever possible the suppression of symptoms is avoided as suppression generally interferes with the healing process. However, suppression can save lives when the need is indicated.

What Type of Training do Naturopathic Physicians Receive?

Naturopathic physicians undergo training that is similar in structure and scope to that of allopathic physicians (MDs) and osteopathic physicians (DOs). Naturopathic medical colleges are four-year graduate schools with rigorous admissions requirements comparable to other medical schools. The

Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine (ND) degree is awarded after classroom, clinical and practical study.

Naturopathic physicians are trained in standard medical sciences including anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, microbiology, immunology, clinical and physical diagnosis, pharmacology, cardiology, neurology, radiology, minor surgery, obstetrics, gynecology, embryology, pediatrics, dermatology and physical medicine. The training also includes extensive study of naturopathic philosophy and therapeutics including clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, homeopathy, physical medicine, hydrotherapy and counseling.

Like many states and provinces, Washington's laws require graduates of naturopathic medical schools to pass rigorous board examinations in order to qualify for licensure. Washington NDs must also complete annual continuing education training to maintain their licenses.

What is the Scope of Practice for Naturopathic Physicians?

Naturopathic physicians are trained to provide primary care and/or specialty care in outpatient settings. NDs see patients with acute and chronic conditions and employ all standard conventional diagnostic tools including physical examination, laboratory tests and imaging. The full range of lab tests and physical exams (including PAP smears) are an essential part of ND training and practice.

NDs may use additional physical and laboratory procedures to assess nutritional status, metabolic function and/or toxic load, while considerable time may also be spent assessing mental, emotional, social and spiritual status to assure that any treatment plan is comprehensive.

NDs use a variety of therapies to promote health and treat disease, including dietetics, clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, physical medicine, naturopathic manipulative therapy, lifestyle counseling, exercise therapy, homeopathy and hydrotherapy. NDs can perform minor office procedures appropriate to a primary care setting, administer vaccinations and prescribe most standard drugs when indicated. Like other primary care doctors, NDs delegate to nurses and medical assistants, and they refer to specialists when appropriate.

Are Naturopathic Physicians Covered by Your Insurance?

We accept and bill for many insurance plans from companies such as Regence, Premera, Aetna, First Choice, Cigna and Uniform. Appointments and laboratory work are usually covered at a certain percentage or with a co-payment. Please contact your insurance plan to verify your specific coverage for complementary and alternative medicine. Vitamins, herbs, natural supplements and tinctures are not currently covered by insurance plans.

The Naturopathic Way

Our physician came to naturopathic medicine because he believes that healing is a dynamic process. This process encompasses the whole-person, not isolated parts and systems. Naturopathy is not about symptom management, though at times this is inevitable. The goal, rather, is to find

the root cause of discomfort and disease in order to re-establish health. The model used to accomplish this goal is Naturopathic medicine. Naturopathic medicine is a thought process that requires putting all the pieces of the patient's puzzle together to find the means of achieving total health.

History

Naturopathic Medicine itself is very old, with roots going back hundreds of years. However it has only recently become a licensed profession. Naturopaths, as with MDs, are licensed by the state in which they practice. You may find people calling themselves Naturopaths who do not practice Naturopathic Medicine. While their intentions may be good, be forewarned that they have not received the level of education that Naturopathic Doctors receive. Unfortunately, there are people who did not attend medical school calling themselves naturopaths. These individuals may have completed online degree programs with little to no medical training and did not receive their degree from an accredited medical school.

You can confirm if a Naturopathic doctor is fully trained by visiting the National Association of Naturopathic Doctor's website at www.naturopathic.org.