

What is Naturopathic Medicine?

Naturopathic medicine is based on the belief that the human body has an innate healing ability. Naturopathic doctors (NDs) teach their patients to use diet, exercise, lifestyle changes and cutting edge natural therapies to enhance their bodies' ability to ward off and combat disease. NDs view the patient as a complex, interrelated system (a whole person), not as a clogged artery or a tumor. Naturopathic physicians craft comprehensive treatment plans that blend the best of modern medical science and traditional natural medical approaches to not only treat disease, but to also restore health.

Naturopathic physicians base their practice on six timeless principles founded on medical tradition and scientific evidence.

- **Let nature heal.** Our bodies have such a powerful, innate instinct for self-healing. By finding and removing the barriers to this self-healing—such as poor diet or unhealthy habits—naturopathic physicians can nurture this process.
- **Identify and treat causes.** Naturopathic physicians understand that symptoms will only return unless the root illness is addressed. Rather than cover up symptoms, they seek to find and treat the cause of these symptoms.
- **First, do no harm.** Naturopathic physicians follow three precepts to ensure their patients' safety:
 - Use low-risk procedures and healing compounds—such as dietary supplements, herbal extracts and homeopathy—with few or no side effects.
 - When possible, do not suppress symptoms, which are the body's efforts to self-heal. For example, the body may cook up a fever in reaction to a bacterial infection. Fever creates an inhospitable environment for the harmful bacteria, thereby destroying it. Of course, the naturopathic physician would not allow the fever to get dangerously high.
 - Customize each diagnosis and treatment plan to fit each patient. We all heal in different ways and the naturopathic physician respects our differences.
- **Educate patients.** Naturopathic medicine believes that doctors must be educators, as well as physicians. That's why naturopathic physicians teach their patients how to eat, exercise, relax and nurture themselves physically and emotionally. They also encourage self-responsibility and work closely with each patient.
- **Treat the whole person.** We each have a unique physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, social, sexual and spiritual makeup. The naturopathic physician knows that all these factors affect our health. That's why he or she includes them in a carefully tailored treatment strategy.
- **Prevent illness.** "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" has never been truer. Proactive medicine saves money, pain, misery and lives. That's why naturopathic physicians evaluate risk factors, heredity and vulnerability to disease. By getting treatment for greater wellness, we're less likely to need treatment for future illness.