

WHAT IS NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct primary health care system that blends modern scientific knowledge with traditional and natural forms of medicine. The naturopathic philosophy is to stimulate the healing power of the body and treat the underlying cause of disease. Symptoms of disease are seen as warning signals of improper functioning of the body, and unfavourable lifestyle habits. Naturopathic Medicine emphasizes disease as a process rather than as an entity.

Treating both acute and chronic conditions, naturopathic treatments are chosen based on the individual patient – their physiological, structural, psychological, social, spiritual, environment and lifestyle factors. In addition to diet and lifestyle changes, natural therapies including botanical medicine, clinical nutrition, hydrotherapy, homeopathy, naturopathic manipulation and traditional Chinese medicine/acupuncture, may also be used during treatments.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Naturopathic doctors are guided by six principles. This set of principles, emphasized throughout a naturopathic doctor's training, outlines the naturopathic approach to health and healing and forms the foundation of this distinct form of health care.

First Do No Harm (Primum Non Nocere)

Naturopathic medicine follows three principles to avoid harming the patient:

1. utilize methods and medicinal substances which minimize the risk of harmful side effects;
2. avoid, when possible, the harmful suppression of symptoms;
3. acknowledge and respect the individual's healing process, using the least force necessary to diagnose and treat illness.

Your naturopathic doctor chooses remedies and therapies that are safe and effective, to increase your health and decrease harmful side effects.

The Healing Power of Nature (Vis Medicatrix Naturae)

Your naturopathic doctor works to restore and support the powerful and inherent healing ability of your body, mind and spirit and to prevent further disease from occurring. Naturopathic doctors identify and remove obstacles to recovery, facilitating and augmenting this ordered and intelligent healing ability.

Identify and Treat the Cause (Tolle Causam)

The primary goal of your naturopathic doctor is to determine and treat the underlying cause rather than simply managing or suppressing the symptoms. The underlying cause may be due to diet, lifestyle habits, life events, posture or environment. Symptoms are viewed as expressions of the body's natural attempt to heal.

Treat the Whole Person

Each person is unique and requires individualized care. In treating the cause of any condition your naturopathic doctor takes into account not only your physical symptoms, but also mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, social, spiritual and other factors. Disease affects the entire person, not just a specific organ or system. Your nutritional status, lifestyle, family history, feelings, environmental stresses, and physical health are all carefully evaluated and addressed.

Doctor as Teacher (Docere)

Your naturopathic doctors will assist you in understanding health and illness. He/she will provide with an understanding of the factors that affect your health and help you balance and become more capable of maintaining your own health. Naturopathic doctors also acknowledge the therapeutic value inherent in the doctor-patient relationship.

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Your naturopathic doctor applies all of the above principles in a proactive form of disease prevention and health promotion. Naturopathic doctors emphasize healthy daily habits, they assess risk factors and hereditary susceptibility to disease and make appropriate interventions to prevent illness. Health is more than just the absence of disease. Health entails daily functioning on the highest possible levels, and is obtained by proper nutrition, exercise, a balanced lifestyle, positive emotions, thoughts and actions. The capacity for optimal wellness or an improved quality of life is inherent in every body.

NATUROPATHIC TRAINING

To obtain a naturopathic medical credential (ND) that qualifies the recipient to sit for licensing examination students must have the following:

- **Prerequisites** including three years of pre-medical sciences at a University with a cumulative grade point average 3.00 on a four point scale. Prerequisite courses: biology, biochemistry, chemistry, organic chemistry, introductory psychology and humanities.
- Successfully complete a **4-year-full time program** in an accredited school of Naturopathic Medicine that includes more than 4,500 hours of classroom training and 1,500 hours of supervised clinical experience.
- Pass NPLEX **board exams** that are written after the 2nd year and 4th year of study. NPLEX is the standard examination used by all licensing jurisdictions for Naturopathic doctors in North America.
- Meet the **Continuing Medical Education (CME)** credits as required by the provincial regulatory boards on an ongoing basis.

Areas of Training

Naturopathic Doctors undergo training similar to medical doctors plus they include the naturopathic disciplines. The four areas of training in the four year, full-time Naturopathic Medicine curriculum are:

- **Basic Sciences** - This area of study includes anatomy, physiology, histology, microbiology, biochemistry, immunology, pharmacology and pathology.
- **Clinical Disciplines** - Diagnostic medicine areas of study are physical and clinical diagnosis, differential and laboratory diagnosis, radiology, naturopathic assessment and orthopaedics.
- **Naturopathic Disciplines** - There are six major disciplines that define the areas of naturopathic practice. Each discipline is a distinct area of practice and includes both diagnostic principles and practices as well as therapeutic skills and techniques. They include: clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, homeopathic medicine, hydrotherapy, naturopathic manipulation and lifestyle counselling.
- **Clinical Experience** - All students must complete 1,500 hours of clinical requirements and demonstrate proficiency in all aspects of Naturopathic Medicine prior to graduation.