



## 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. Naturopathic medicine is the art and science of disease diagnosis, treatment and prevention using natural therapies, including botanical medicine, clinical nutrition, hydrotherapy, homeopathy, naturopathic manipulation, traditional Chinese medicine/acupuncture, and lifestyle counseling.**

A naturopathic doctor is a primary care practitioner who seeks to restore and maintain optimum health in patients by emphasizing nature's inherent self-healing process. Naturopathic doctors view the individual as an integral whole comprised of physiological, structural, psychological, social, spiritual, environmental and lifestyle factors affecting health. Symptoms of disease are seen as warning signals of improper functioning of the body and unfavorable lifestyle habits. Naturopathic medicine emphasizes disease as a process rather than disease as an entity. A naturopathic doctor's primary goal is to treat the underlying cause of disease. This approach has proven successful in treating both chronic and acute conditions. Treatments are chosen based on the individual patient, not the generality of symptoms.

Naturopathic doctors can also complement and enhance health care services provided by other health care professionals. They cooperate with other branches of medical science by referring patients to other practitioners for diagnosis or treatment when appropriate. Naturopathic doctors provide patients with a truly integrated form of health care.

In Canada, the naturopathic medical profession's infrastructure includes accredited educational institutions, professional licensing, national standards of practice, participation in many federal health committee initiatives, and a commitment to state-of-the-art scientific research.

### What can it do for you?

Naturopathic medicine treats all forms of health concerns – from pediatric to geriatric, from irritating systems to chronic illness and from the physical to the psychological. It is the approach, philosophy and training of naturopathic doctors that sets naturopathic medicine apart from other forms of health care.

There are typically three types of patients who seek naturopathic medical care:

**1) Patients who are looking for disease prevention and health promotion strategies.** Individuals who recognize that health

doesn't just happen by chance but that it is a life-long process that involves a clear understanding of the factors that affect health and how to deal with them on a daily basis.

**2) Patients who have a range of symptoms that they have been unable to address on their own or with the help of other medical practitioners.** With naturopathic medicine's broad understanding of the relationship between health, life and the environment, naturopathic doctors are often able to offer patients a new perspective and provide safe and effective ways to restore health.

**3) Patients who have been diagnosed with an illness and are looking for alternative treatments.** Naturopathic medicine is very effective in improving quality of life for those with serious and life-threatening illnesses. It is used extensively and effectively for patients looking to combine conventional and naturopathic treatments with the aim of minimizing side effects to drugs, surgery or conventional treatments.

The naturopathic philosophy is to stimulate the healing power of the body and to treat the root cause of disease. For many patients, this difference in approach to health provides them with a new perspective and awareness. By addressing the root cause(s) of disease and through the appropriate use of natural therapies, many patients with chronic illness have found tremendous benefits.

### Naturopathic Training

To obtain a naturopathic medical credential (ND), which 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.

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## What is Naturopathic Medicine? (cont.)

- 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 and 4th years 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.

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

- **Sciences** – This area of study includes anatomy, physiology, histology, microbiology, biochemistry, immunology, pharmacology and pathology.
- **Clinical Disciplines** – Diagnostic medicine areas of study include physical and clinical diagnosis, differential and laboratory diagnosis, radiology, naturopathic assessment and orthopedics.
- **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 counseling.
- **Clinical Experience** – All students must complete 1,500 hours of clinical requirements and demonstrate proficiency in all aspects of naturopathic medicine prior to graduation.

### Coverage

Many private and corporate health benefit plans cover naturopathic medical visits and tests. Please check with your insurance provider to determine your coverage and/or to request that your policy be extended to include naturopathic services. Naturopathic visits are not currently covered by provincial health care plans.

