

Naturopathic Medicine

Naturopathic medicine is a system of medicine that has been practiced in North America for over 125 years. Naturopathic medicine is a distinct form of primary health care built on a patient-centred approach that emphasizes prevention, treatment, and optimal health through the use of therapeutic methods and substances that support the body's natural ability to heal and help the patient achieve sustainable health and wellness.

Naturopathic medicine involves a functional medicine approach to healthcare, identifying the biochemical and physiological imbalances within the individual, and using natural, scientifically-proven solutions to rectify these imbalances. Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) focus on naturally occurring substances, minimally invasive methods, and the promotion of natural healing. They also emphasize illness prevention and a healthy diet and lifestyle.

Naturopathic Doctors focus not only on the symptoms but also the underlying conditions causing the symptoms. Naturopathic Doctors treat the root causes of disease and address preventable risk factors, using a wide range of science-and evidence-based, natural and conventional therapies.

Naturopathic medicine focuses on an understanding of the origins of acute and chronic disease and working to support and assist the body's natural ability to heal, getting to the root cause of what's wrong. Naturopathic assessment, diagnosis and treatment of the individual patient are accomplished by integrating modern and traditional care which includes clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques. All therapeutic options are considered and applied to help regulate the process of disease over time rather than temporarily suppress it. Naturopathic medicine is evidence-based, informed by clinical experience, research and the individual patient's unique health situation. Health promotion and disease prevention are a particular foundation of naturopathic medicine.

The focus of naturopathic care is the individual, their current health (physical, emotional and spiritual), family history as well as lifestyle choices and environmental influences, all of which inform the naturopathic assessment, diagnosis and treatment plan offered by a Naturopathic Doctor.

Naturopathic assessment, diagnosis and treatment draws from a number of modalities (therapies) and is tailored to the individual. Treatments may include clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, homeopathic medicine, physical treatments, acupuncture and Asian medicine, and lifestyle counselling.

Naturopathic medicine is a distinct form of primary health care. There are seven accredited schools of naturopathic medicine in North America.

Naturopathic medicine is based on the following principles:

- Utilization of therapies that are minimally invasive i.e., first do no harm
- The Healing power of nature
- Identification and treatment of the causes of disease
- The primary role of the doctor as the teacher
- Treatment of the whole person
- Disease prevention and health promotion

Naturopathic medicine is for people of all ages and health histories who want to take their health into their own hands. NDs are primary health care providers and are qualified to see and treat everyone. Some NDs focus their practices in specific areas, such as treating children or the elderly, providing adjunctive cancer support, sport-related health, digestive health, pain management, etc. The majority of NDs work in multi-disciplinary practices with health professionals from other regulated professions including for example, conventional medical doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and chiropractors.

Regulation of Naturopathic Medicine

From 1925 until 2015, Ontario's Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) were regulated under the Drugless Practitioners Act. Naturopathic medicine got its own piece of legislation in 2015. On July 1st of that year, the Naturopathy Act 2007 was proclaimed and NDs became regulated under the Regulated Health Professions Act. Naturopathic Doctors are regulated by the College of Naturopaths of Ontario (CONO), an arm's length body of the government of Ontario with an independent Registrar and Council.