



Including Naturopathic Physicians in Medicare

About Naturopathic Physicians



What is a Naturopathic Physician?

Naturopathic physicians (NDs) combine the wisdom of nature with the rigors of modern science. They focus on holistic, proactive prevention and comprehensive diagnosis and treatment. Naturopathic medicine facilitates the body's inherent ability to restore and maintain optimal health.

NDs are recognized as primary care physicians in many states. They work in private practices, hospitals, clinics, and community health centers. Among the most common ailments they treat are allergies, chronic pain, digestive issues, hormonal imbalances, obesity, heart disease, fertility problems, menopause, adrenal fatigue, cancer, and fibromyalgia.

Naturopathic physicians are trained in a variety of diagnostic and therapeutic modalities. They include: clinical and laboratory diagnostic testing, nutritional medicine, botanical medicine, naturopathic physical medicine (including naturopathic manipulative therapy), immunizations, counseling, minor surgery, homeopathy, acupuncture, intravenous and injection therapy, and naturopathic obstetrics (natural childbirth). While NDs are trained to prescribe drugs, they emphasize the use of natural healing agents.

Principles of Naturopathic Medicine

The following principles are the foundation of naturopathic medical practice:

- **The Healing Power of Nature:** Naturopathic medicine recognizes an inherent self-healing process in people that is ordered and intelligent. Naturopathic physicians act to identify and remove obstacles to healing and recovery.
- **Identify and Treat the Causes:** NDs seek to identify and remove the underlying causes of illness rather than to merely eliminate or suppress symptoms.
- **First Do No Harm:** NDs follow three guidelines to avoid harming the patient:
 - Utilize methods and medicinal substances which minimize the risk of harmful side effects, using the least force necessary to diagnose and treat;
 - Avoid when possible the harmful suppression of symptoms; and
 - Acknowledge, respect, and work with individuals' self-healing process.
- **Doctor as Teacher:** NDs educate their patients and encourage self-responsibility for health.
- **Treat the Whole Person:** NDs treat each patient by taking into account individual physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, social, and other factors. Since total health also includes spiritual health, naturopathic physicians encourage individuals to pursue their personal spiritual development.
- **Prevention:** NDs emphasize the prevention of disease by assessing risk factors, heredity and susceptibility to disease, and by making appropriate interventions in partnership with their patients to prevent illness.