



Naturopathic Medicine: Frequently Asked Questions

A service for consumers from the [American Association of Naturopathic Physicians \(AANP\)](#) and the [Institute for Natural Medicine \(INM\)](#)

FAQ #3: Under what circumstances should I choose to see a naturopathic doctor?

1. You want a doctor who will treat all of you, not just your illness.

Naturopathic doctors (NDs) are trained to treat the whole person. This requires taking the time to listen and understand the genetic, environmental, and behavioral/lifestyle factors that can affect your health. At your initial appointment, you'll spend up to an hour or more talking with your ND.

2. You want personalized treatment.

NDs understand there is no one-size-fits-all treatment that works for everybody. After your visit with an ND, you'll leave the doctor's office with a treatment plan uniquely tailored to you, your health status, your health goals, and your lifestyle.

3. You want to treat the root cause of an illness, not just the symptoms.

Sometimes having trouble sleeping, aches and pains, strange or hard to treat skin rashes, and indigestion or stomach discomfort are symptoms of an underlying illness. While these symptoms can be managed, it's more important to understand and treat the root cause—which is the focus of naturopathic medicine.

4. You want to actively participate in managing your own health.

An ND will help you learn what your body needs to get well and stay healthy. Patients have the opportunity to feel empowered and hopeful when they understand and are actively engaged in managing their own health.

5. You have chronic pain and don't want to use pharmaceutical drugs such as ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or highly addictive opioids to manage it forever.

Pain that lasts six months or more is more complex than acute pain and requires a holistic, long-term approach to manage. NDs are trained to work with you to determine which combination of therapies will work best for you to heal or manage your pain safely so that you can resume daily activities.

6. You have tried all conventional medical options for diagnosing and treating a health condition.

Certain chronic health conditions that have symptoms such as fatigue, insomnia, or gastrointestinal distress can be difficult to diagnose and treat, and can benefit from a holistic approach. NDs use diagnostic tools common in conventional medicine, such as detailed health, disease, and prescription drug histories, physical exams, and targeted laboratory testing and imaging. NDs also consider detailed diet history, lifestyle habits and choices, exercise history, and social/emotional factors to assess patients' needs. These approaches can open doors to new treatment pathways and options.

Licensed naturopathic doctors and their scope of practice

Licensed naturopathic doctors combine knowledge of the body's natural healing properties with the rigors of modern science to focus on holistic, proactive prevention and comprehensive diagnosis and treatment. By using protocols that minimize the risk of harm, naturopathic physicians help facilitate the body's inherent ability to restore and maintain optimal health.

Naturopathic doctors treat all medical conditions and can provide both individual and family health care. They can work as primary care providers and as part of an integrated healthcare team. Among the most common ailments they treat are allergies, chronic pain, digestive issues, hormonal imbalances, obesity, respiratory conditions, heart disease, fertility problems, menopause, adrenal fatigue, cancer, fibromyalgia, and chronic fatigue syndrome. Naturopathic doctors can perform minor surgeries, such as removing cysts or stitching up superficial wounds, however they do not practice major surgery. They also are trained to use prescription drugs, although they emphasize less toxic substances that promote natural healing first, following the Therapeutic Order™ to provide the greatest benefit with the least potential for damage. For more information on the Therapeutic Order, see FAQ #2 in this service, available [here](#).

Naturopathic doctors can order all blood reference range and diagnostic imaging tests. They can also order individualized specialty functional medicine labs, such as those for assessing digestive impairment, hormone imbalances, heavy metal and/or environmental toxin exposure, nutritional deficiencies, and adrenal dysregulation. They will evaluate your lab results in combination with your clinical presentation, your health history, and lifestyle and environment factors that might be preventing you from having optimal health.

Choose your naturopathic doctor wisely

When seeking medical care from a naturopathic doctor, it is important to select a doctor who has a naturopathic medical degree earned from an accredited, four-year, in-residence, naturopathic medical college and is licensed or certified. For more information on how to choose a naturopathic doctor, see FAQ #1 in this service, available [here](#).