

Chapter Two

Naturopathic Approaches

Naturopathic medicine is based on scientific evidence as well as common sense. Our health depends on what we eat, how much physical activity we get, what our lifestyle is like and how well we cope with stress. Using carefully honed diagnostic skills and experience in treating the “whole person,” the naturopathic physician will help you understand and utilize your tailor-made treatment program.

All naturopathic physicians receive training in these key modalities:

- Clinical nutrition;
- Homeopathic medicine;
- Botanical medicine;
- Physical medicine;
- Oriental medicine;
- Counseling and stress management; and
- Minor surgery

Whether you have a specific condition or merely need an annual check up, a naturopathic physician will utilize his/her expertise to help you achieve your health goals. Naturopathic physicians focus on offering safe, effective, natural therapies and consultation. This often begins with diet and dietary supplements.

Dietary Foundation

You are what you eat. That’s why nutrition is one of the cornerstones of naturopathic medicine. Unfortunately, we live in an “anti-nutrition” culture, with a plethora of processed foods, fast foods and food “products.” The Standard American Diet (S.A.D.) is high in saturated and trans fats, refined sugar, artificial sweeteners, sodium, preservatives, caffeine, pesticides, and hormone- and antibiotic-laced meats. S.A.D. falls woefully short on fiber, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, pure water and healthy fats such as omega-3s and omega-6s. Poor diet has led to rising obesity rates, which has been implicated in coronary heart disease, hypertension,

osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, endometrial, breast and colon cancers, and other life-threatening illnesses.

A naturopathic physician recommends a common-sense, back-to-basics plant-based diet. Although a nutritional plan may be customized to address your specific vulnerabilities, a naturopathic diet typically emphasizes the following:

- Organic fruits and vegetables, including raw vegetables;
- Seeds and nuts;
- Omega-3 fatty acids, available in cold water fish, and flaxseeds, as well as omega-9 fatty acids found in olive oil;
- Whole grains;
- Legumes, such as beans and lentils;
- Lean, free-range meats, unless you’re a vegetarian;
- Organic dairy foods, unless you’re a vegan or are intolerant to dairy products;
- Plenty of pure water;
- Avoidance of foods to which you may be allergic or sensitive (such as wheat, dairy, corn, peanuts, soy); and
- A reduction of refined sugars and grains (i.e. white sugar and white flour) and processed foods.

Lifestyle Changes

A wholesome diet is a powerful start, but it can’t transform your health all by itself. Along with dietary changes, your naturopathic physician will likely recommend changes in your lifestyle, such as exercising more, quitting smoking, moderating alcohol use and coping with stress.

Naturopathic physicians work closely with their patients to involve them in the process of making these lifestyle changes. An ND may introduce lifestyle changes gradually, so the patient can adapt more easily and have a better chance at success. Following is an overview of some key lifestyle issues that a naturopath may focus on.

Exercise. Only 16 percent of the U.S. population age 15 and older exercises on a regular basis, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Whether it’s walking, lifting weights at the gym or doing jumping jacks during TV commercials, regular physical activity can dramatically reduce your risk of illness. The Mayo Clinic cites seven benefits you can reap by getting at least a half-hour of exercise five days a week: 1) Feel happier; 2) Fight chronic illness; 3) Lose weight; 4) Fortify your heart and lungs;