HIGHLIGHTS

• The healing power of nature recognizes the body’s inherent ability to heal itself.

• The building blocks of your body—cells—are dynamic, living units that are constantly working to self-repair and regenerate.

• The body’s organs and systems work hard on their own to support recovery from injury and illness.

• Certain genetic, environmental, and behavioral/lifestyle factors can slow or prevent optimal healing and recovery.

• NDs focus on identifying and removing obstacles to recovery, in order to facilitate the natural healing ability in their patients.

FAQ #16: What do naturopathic doctors mean by the healing power of nature?

Naturopathic doctors follow six guiding principles that serve as a philosophical platform for everything they do. The principles influence how they think about medicine, how they make clinical decisions, and most importantly, how they treat you as a patient. Each principle plays a role in guiding naturopathic doctors in diagnosis and treatment. The healing power of nature is one of these six core principles.

The healing power of nature recognizes the body’s inherent ability to heal itself. This begins at the cellular level. The building blocks of your body—cells—are dynamic, living units that are constantly working to self-repair and regenerate. For example, when your skin is cut or scraped, you start to bleed. Your blood platelets clump together and clot to protect the wound. Blood vessels allow fresh nutrients and oxygen into the wound for healing. White blood cells accumulate on the site of the wound to protect it from infection, and red blood cells arrive to build new tissue. This remarkable process stops when healing is complete.

Naturopathic therapies support and enhance the natural healing power of the body.

Self-healing extends beyond the skin level. The body works hard on its own to support recovery from injury and illness. Damaged, destroyed, or dead cells are replaced daily and automatically in your major organ systems. When you have a virus, your immune system attacks it. The digestive system consistently replaces old cells that line the gastrointestinal tract with newer ones. When you break a bone, bone cells kick into action to grow back together.

But certain genetic, environmental, and behavioral/lifestyle factors can slow or prevent optimal healing and recovery. These factors, unique to each individual, get in the way of the body’s inherent ability to heal. Naturopathic doctors focus on identifying and removing obstacles to recovery, in order to facilitate the natural healing ability in patients.

For example, food sensitivities or intolerances, unmanaged emotional stress, insufficient physical activity, and an imbalanced lipid profile are just a few examples of barriers to optimal healing that naturopathic doctors are trained to identify and treat.
Naturopathic doctors often spend between one and two hours with patients in an initial appointment to uncover individual hurdles to optimal health.

Naturopathic doctors utilize the **Therapeutic Order**[^3], a natural order of therapeutic intervention used to help discover and evaluate multiple obstacles to healing, as a framework for diagnosis and treatment. These guidelines are aimed at supporting the body’s health restoring and maintenance processes, as opposed to just reducing symptoms. Naturopathic doctors view symptoms as nature’s attempt to correct imbalances. Consequently, naturopathic treatments are geared toward allowing the body to heal rather than suppressing symptoms, which can lead to a prolongation of the disease.

Naturopathic doctors individualize and prioritize natural, minimally invasive therapies. They are also trained to use pharmacological drugs when necessary. If state license permits, an ND can prescribe medication as a bridge to manage symptoms until the body repairs itself. If not, they will refer patients to a conventional medical colleague.

In focusing on the healing power of nature, naturopathic doctors empower patients both to understand the role their body plays in healing itself, and to engage actively in restoring and maintaining their own health. This kind of empowerment in health care can lead to better outcomes and lowered healthcare costs.[^4]

[^2]: https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=134&ContentID=143