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What is naturopathic medicine?

Naturopathic physicians are primary care and specialty doctors who address the underlying cause of disease through effective, individualized natural therapies that integrate the healing powers of body, mind, and spirit. Naturopathic doctors are unique in providing diagnosis and treatment that bridges both conventional and natural medicine perspectives; they integrate scientific research with the healing powers of nature. The goal of a naturopathic doctor is to utilize therapies that support and promote the body's natural healing process, leading to a state of optimal wellness.

Naturopathic medicine is a complete and coordinated approach to health care. It is the art and science of disease diagnosis, treatment, and prevention using natural therapies and gentle techniques. Doctors of Naturopathic Medicine are specialists in natural medicine and preventative health care, integrating scientific knowledge with traditional healing wisdom. They are health care professionals who use safe, gentle, non-invasive therapies to assist the whole person in maximizing the body's inherent self-healing capacity.

Naturopathic medicine is a system of health care distinct from conventional medicine in that it treats the individual, not the disease, and looks to heal symptoms from their root cause rather than simply palliate them.

Naturopathic treatment invokes the body's healing capacity and stimulates health from the inside out. Trained to utilize a variety of therapeutic modalities, naturopathic doctors focus on:

assessment and treatment of the underlying causes of illness

health maintenance and wellness promotion

preventing disease

teaching patients about healthy living

Naturopathic medicine combines safe and effective traditional therapies with the most current advances in modern medicine. Naturopathic medicine is appropriate for the management of a broad range of health conditions affecting people of all ages, including pre-and post-natal care.

Education and Training:

Licensed Naturopathic Doctors complete 4 years of full-time graduate study at an accredited school studying the medical sciences, including:

anatomy, physiology, immunology, microbiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, pathology, physical and clinical diagnosis, laboratory diagnosis, primary care, obstetrics, pediatric medicine

Naturopathic medical education also includes studying naturopathic philosophy, principles, and treatment modalities, including:

clinical nutrition, Asian medicine and acupuncture, homeopathic medicine, botanical medicine, physical medicine

Naturopathic Doctors must pass two sets of comprehensive North American board exams and a provincial board exam to become licensed in B.C.

What to expect:

Naturopathic treatment is comprehensive and requires your active involvement. The naturopathic doctor acts as a facilitator and guide, allowing you to take charge of your own health and to develop new skills for healthy living. Our goal is to promote wellness in your life, regardless of the physical challenges you may face.

Assessment is made through an understanding of your personal history along with physical examination, laboratory testing, and symptom evaluation. Treatment may include any of the following: dietary and lifestyle regimens, homeopathic medicine, herbal medicines, nutritional supplements, acupuncture, counseling, hydrotherapy, body work, and physical medicine.

Naturopathic care is covered by many extended health plans.

Philosophy and Principles of Naturopathic Medicine

There are six time tested medical principles on which naturopathic medicine is based. These principles make as much sense in today's modern world as they did 200 years ago.

1. First Do No Harm. Naturopathic physicians seek to do no harm with medical treatments by employing safe and effective natural therapies. They seek to produce "side-benefits" not side-effects.
2. Nature has healing powers. Naturopathic physicians believe that the body has considerable power to heal itself. It is the role of the physician to facilitate and enhance this process and with the aid of natural, nontoxic therapies.
3. Identify and treat the cause. Naturopathic physicians are trained to seek the underlying causes of a disease rather than to simply suppress symptoms.

Symptoms are viewed as expressions of the body's attempt to heal, while the causes can spring from the physical, mental / emotional and spiritual levels.

4. Treat the whole person. Naturopathic physicians are trained to view an individual as a whole, composed of a complex set of physical, mental / emotional, spiritual and social, and other factors.

5. The physician is a teacher. Naturopathic physicians are primarily teachers, educating, empowering and motivating patients to assume more personal responsibility for their health by adopting a healthy attitude, lifestyle, and diet.

6. Prevention is the best cure. Naturopathic physicians are preventive medicine specialists. Prevention of disease is accomplished through education and encouraging life habits that support health and prevent disease.

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