

# What is Naturopathic Medicine?

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Naturopathic doctors combine the best of conventional medicine and alternative medicine to help their patients achieve the greatest health. As licensed primary care practitioners, they treat people with an emphasis on natural healing methods.

Licensed, board-certified Naturopathic Doctors attend 4-year post-graduate naturopathic medical colleges with admission requirements comparable to those of conventional medical schools. Naturopathic Doctors are the only doctors whose training provides both a firm scientific foundation and in-depth study of natural therapeutics. There are currently 4 such colleges in the US.

For a list of the schools click here : [http://www.fnpla.org/master\\_frameset.htm](http://www.fnpla.org/master_frameset.htm)

The greatest difference between an orthodox medical doctor and a naturopathic doctor is the philosophy upon which the naturopathic doctor operates. The core of this philosophy can be expressed in six principals: First do no harm, the healing power of nature, identify and treat the cause, treat the whole person, doctor as teacher, and prevention

**First do no harm.** *primum nocere* Illness can be looked at as a purposeful process of the organism. The process of healing includes the generation of symptoms (often thought of as the pathology) which are, in fact, an expression of the life force attempting to heal itself. Therapeutic actions should cooperate and assist with this healing process. The doctor's actions can support or antagonize the actions of the *vis medicatrix naturae* (more on this below). It is thought that methods designed to suppress symptoms without removing underlying causes are considered harmful and should be avoided or minimized.

**The healing power of nature.** *vis medicatrix naturae* All bodies have the inherent ability to establish, maintain, and restore health. This process of healing is ordered and intelligent; nature heals through the response of the life force. The doctor's role is to assist and enhance this process, to identify and remove obstacles to health and recovery, and to support having and maintaining a healthy internal and external environment.

**Identify and treat the cause.** *tolle causam* Symptoms are the body's expressions of attempting to heal, they are not the cause of disease. Symptoms of illness are not the cause of the disease. It is the underlying cause of disease must be found and addressed, removed or treated before a person can recover completely from illness. This is thought of as the obstacle to cure. Symptoms, therefore, should not be suppressed by treatment. These obstacles may occur on many levels including environmental, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. The doctor must evaluate fundamental underlying causes on all levels, directing treatment at root causes rather than at the symptoms that are being expressed.

**Treat the whole person.** One is not simply a sum of their parts Disease as well as health are conditions of the whole organism, this involves a complex interaction of many factors including physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, and social. The doctor should treat the whole person by accounting for all these factors. All areas of an individual's life should function together for the recovery and prevention of disease. A personalized and comprehensive approach to diagnosis and treatment should take the whole person into account.

**The doctor as teacher.** *Docere* The original meaning of the word "doctor" is teacher. A principal objective of naturopathic medicine is to educate the patient and emphasize self-responsibility for health. Naturopathic doctors also recognize and employ the therapeutic potential of the doctor-patient relationship. One of the doctor's crucial roles is to educate and encourage, the patient to take responsibility for their health through motivation, empowerment and education. The doctor must also make a personal commitment to their own personal and spiritual development so as to be a good teacher.

**Prevention.** Prevention is the best "cure" The paramount goal of a true health care system should be the prevention of disease. This is best achieved through education and promotion of life style choices that create optimum health. The physician assesses risk factors and hereditary susceptibility to disease and makes appropriate recommendations to avoid further harm and risk to the patient. The emphasis is put on building and strengthening health rather than on fighting disease.