



Naturopathic Medicine

FAQS

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



HIGHLIGHTS

To help you in taking charge of your health naturopathic doctors:

- Work to identify underlying causes of illness, and develop personalized treatment plans to address them.
- Focus on prevention and empowering you to make lifestyle changes.
- Often spend 30-90 minutes with you and also want you to interact with them to make sure you thoroughly understand your overall health, chronic issues you might have, or diseases for which you might be at risk.
- Work closely with you over time to help ensure your success.

FAQ #10:

How do naturopathic doctors empower people to take charge of their health?

Empowering people to become more informed about their health options, more involved in decisions made about their health, and more capable of maintaining their own good health can lead to better health outcomes and lower costs.¹

In addition to diagnosing and treating illness, licensed naturopathic doctors are uniquely educated and trained to treat the whole person, to focus on prevention, and to empower patients to make lifestyle changes in order to achieve optimal health. This attention to patient-centered care is especially valuable when it comes to the prevention and treatment of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes.

Among US adults, [90% of Type 2 diabetes, 80% of cardiovascular disease, 70% of stroke, 70% of colon cancer are potentially preventable by modifiable lifestyle changes.](#) Research has shown that for many people, these conditions can be prevented or better managed through dietary and lifestyle changes—treatments that require patients to actively participate in their own care.

Naturopathic doctors will want to make sure you know your options and will collaborate with you on decisions regarding your care.

For example, a major study investigating the effects of lifestyle changes in patients with coronary atherosclerosis found that after only one year of following lifestyle recommendations, about 80% of participants were able bring about plaque regression and avoid surgery without the use of lipid lowering agents.³ In addition, studies have shown that proper testing, treatment, and lifestyle changes such as losing weight, adopting a healthy diet, and physical activity have beneficial effects on people with type-2 diabetes and are the cornerstones of diabetes prevention in at-risk individuals.⁴

With compelling evidence of the value of actively participating in our own health, why doesn't everyone do it? There are many reasons, but one stands out: it's human nature to want a quick fix, and taking charge of your own health takes time and work.



Naturopathic Medicine uses natural substances to restore & regenerate



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Naturopathic doctors work to identify underlying causes of illness, and develop personalized treatment plans to address them. They believe you know your body better than anyone else, and will ask you detailed questions not only about your symptoms, but also about your environment, living situation, mental health and family history in order to understand what might be causing your symptoms.

Naturopathic doctors will use diagnostic tools such as detailed health, disease, and prescription drug histories, physical exams, and targeted laboratory testing and imaging when assessing your needs. Then, when a treatment plan is being considered, naturopathic doctors will want to make sure you know your options and will collaborate with you on decisions regarding your care.

An important underlying principle of naturopathic medicine is “doctor as teacher.” Naturopathic doctors will often spend 30-90 minutes with their patients and also want *you* to ask questions and interact with them to make sure you thoroughly understand your overall health, chronic issues you might have, or diseases for which you might be at risk.

Equally important, naturopathic doctors will work closely with you over time to help ensure your success. For example, they might help you shift your mindset to make and sustain lifestyle changes or modify your expectations about how quickly you will see improvement. As an empowered patient, here’s how you can help naturopathic doctors help you:

- Get to know yourself and your body better so you can provide detailed information about symptoms and how you feel
- Try to answer questions you’ll be asked about all aspects of your life and lifestyle as honestly as you can
- Be prepared to ask questions of your own, engage in a dialogue about your health, and participate in decision-making about treatment options.

Bottom line, what you choose to do can make as much or more of a difference to your health than any decisions even the most knowledgeable and skilled naturopathic doctor might make for you.

For more information on naturopathic medicine, see FAQ #2 in this service, available [here](#).

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1 Health Policy Brief: Patient engagement. Health Affairs. February 14, 2013. Accessed October 17, 2017 http://healthaffairs.org/healthpolicybriefs/brief_pdfs/healthpolicybrief_86.pdf

2 Oberg EB, Bradley R, Hsu C, Sherman KJ, Catz S, Calabrese C, et al. (2012) Patient-reported experiences with first-time naturopathic care for type-2 diabetes. PLoS One 2012;7:11. Accessed October 17, 2017 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0048549>

3 Ornish D, Brown SE, Scherwitz LW, et al. Can lifestyle changes reverse coronary heart disease? The Lifestyle Heart Trial. Lancet. 1990;336:129–133. Accessed October 17, 2017 [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PII0140-6736\(90\)91656-U/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PII0140-6736(90)91656-U/abstract)

4 Asif M. The prevention and control the type-2 diabetes by changing lifestyle and dietary pattern. J Educ Health Promot. 2014;3:1. Accessed October 17, 2017 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3977406/>