



Q and A

What is Naturopathic Medicine?

Naturopathic medicine is a healthcare practice that blends modern scientific knowledge with traditional and natural medicine.

What do Naturopathic Doctors Do?

Naturopathic Doctors are recognized medical professionals who clinically assess, diagnose and treat patients using a whole person, individualized, natural approach.

What is the training for NDs and how does it differ from MDs?

Like a conventional doctor a naturopathic doctor first completes an undergraduate degree at a recognized, accredited university. The naturopathic student then enters into a four-year, full-time accredited naturopathic medical program. Training includes basic, medical and clinical sciences; diagnostics; naturopathic principles and therapeutics and clinical training under the supervision of qualified naturopathic doctors. Graduates of the program receive the title “N.D” or Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine.

Additional/alternative statements: To become a naturopathic doctor in Canada an individual must have completed an undergraduate degree with mandatory science pre-requisites– much like the requirements for acceptance into a mainstream medical program. The education consists of four years of full time study at an accredited naturopathic medical program and includes over 1300 hours of supervised clinical experience. Upon graduation students are eligible to write the North American standardized naturopathic licensing exams (NPLEX) in order to qualify for licensure/registration.

In Canada, the naturopathic professions infrastructure includes accredited naturopathic medical programs, rigorous standardized North American Board Exams (NPLEX) and jurisdictional exams, national standards of practice and regulation in six provinces.

What is the difference between NDs and MDs?

Both are doctors, both provide primary care and both are similarly trained. The primary differences between naturopathic and conventional medicine are the philosophical approach and the therapies used. Naturopathic doctors (NDs) treat patients as individuals by addressing the physical, environmental, lifestyle, attitudinal, and emotional aspects of health. This allows naturopathic doctors to find and treat the cause of the disease, not just symptoms, using a variety of therapies.

Do NDs Work with other health care professionals/MDs?

Yes, Naturopathic doctors work in integrative clinics, hospitals, corporate health facilities and community health centers alongside MDs and other health care professionals as part of a patient's health care team. In many provinces NDs are regulated under the same legislation as MDs, Dentists, and Nurses.

It is important to tell all the members of your health care team which other practitioners you are seeing and what Natural Health Products or drugs you are taking under their care.

Is Naturopathic Medicine Science Based?

There is a growing body of evidence as well as ongoing research supporting naturopathic medicine - i.e. diabetes, cardiovascular disease (published in CMAJ 2014), low back pain, the use of various supplements etc. The research consists of clinical trials, systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Both accredited naturopathic educational institutions in Canada have robust research departments partnering with leading Universities and research institutes worldwide.

Research conducted to date has been published in the top naturopathic and medical journals such as: Integrative Cancer Therapy, Benefits and Pensions Monitor (cost effectiveness), Journal of Occupational Environmental Medicine and the Canadian Medical Association Journal (cardiovascular).

As the medicine and research continue to evolve and new or more advanced research methods of evaluating therapies are discovered we may be able to better assess and determine the mechanisms of action and the validity of some therapies that do not currently have extensive clinical research to support them, such as Chelation therapy, IV therapy and Food Sensitivity Testing

The Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors (CAND) advocates on behalf of the profession federally, is committed to state of the art scientific research and supports the regulation of all health care professionals to ensure public safety.

What about Homeopathy, it has been discredited by science yet NDs use it, why?

The history of the use of homeopathic medicine dates back 100's of years. There are opposing views as to its validity/effectiveness but homeopathy continues to be used by many healthcare practitioners around the world including medical doctors. In countries such as Germany and France it is estimated that 40% (Germany) to 75% (France) of medical doctors prescribe homeopathic medicine to their patients regularly. While more research is needed to confirm the therapeutic benefits, some doctors see results for their patients. At this point the research is inconclusive but these remedies have low toxicity with low potential for harm and as a result many conventional as well as naturopathic doctors continue to prescribe them.

*For consideration: One of the challenges for homeopathy is that conventional research looks at the same drug for all trial participants or a placebo while a principle tenet of homeopathy requires individualization of treatment. Perhaps Homeopathy relates more closely to the pharmacological principle of a "biphasic response". Rather than a drug showing increased effects as its dose becomes larger research has consistently shown that exceedingly small doses of a substance will have the opposite effects of large doses.

Isn't selling product a conflict of interest?

NDs recommend professional use products and formulations for patients that are often not available in standard retail environments. In many cases the ND will compound a formula to meet a patient's specific needs. Having a dispensary ensures quality and potency of the products and access to certain remedies that may not be available in a retail setting. Dispensaries are particularly important in remote or rural communities.

To avoid conflict of interest strict policies have been developed by the regulatory colleges that oversee the profession. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/150168>; http://www.collegeofnaturopaths.on.ca/CONO/Resources/Professional_Standards__Policies_and_Guidelines/CONO/Resources/Professional_Standards__Policies__and_Guidelines/Professional_Standards.aspx?hkey=930bfc83-1add-466d-be0f-8cb95ed002ca

Why aren't my visits to a ND covered under the publically funded health care system?

The practice of naturopathic medicine involves NDs spending time with patients. Your first visit with a Naturopathic Doctor is typically at least an hour so that the ND can thoroughly review your history, your health concerns and the life factors that impact your health. Follow-up visits are usually 30 minutes. This is not possible under the publically funded health care system where it is estimated an MD must see a different patient every 7 to 10 minutes.

We do not know whether that will change in the future but the good news is that visits to an ND **are** covered by extended health insurance as well as Health Spending Accounts.

Questions related to statements made in the TV and digital commercials

“It’s Time for a Second Opinion on Your Health”

Consulting with an ND does not mean turning your back on conventional medicine. In fact many Canadians see both a GP and an ND. Canadians have choices. Choices mean healthcare that can deliver the best of both worlds. We’re saying maybe it’s time to get a second opinion, a new perspective on your health by consulting a naturopathic doctor.

Lab coat – why are you wearing it, are you trying to be MDs?

In preparing our awareness campaign we asked those in our research group what would demonstrate to them that NDs were highly educated and trained health care professionals. Once they understood the education and training required to be an ND in Canada they told us very clearly that they viewed a lab coat as an indication of an educated, trained, health care professional. NDs are medically trained health care professionals who first put on a lab coat as students when they enter their clinical rotation.