



## Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine & Health Sciences

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### What is a Naturopathic Physician?

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Naturopathic physicians are primary health care practitioners whose diverse healing techniques include modern and traditional, scientific and empirical methods. Naturopathic medicine is a distinct system of primary healthcare – an art, science, philosophy and practice of diagnosis, treatment and prevention of illness. The principles of Naturopathic Medicine are based upon objective observation of the nature of health and disease, and are continually re-examined in the light of scientific advances. Methods used are consistent with these principles and are chosen upon the basis of patient individuality.

#### **What Kind of Education is Required to Become a N.D.?**

Naturopathic medical colleges are four-year postgraduate schools with admission requirements comparable to those of conventional medical schools. The degree of Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine requires four years of graduate level study in the medical sciences.

#### **Why Can't I Get My N.D. Degree Through Correspondence Courses?**

The four-year post graduate residency program requires hand-on experience with the different modalities and bio-medical sciences. Because the coursework in natural therapeutics is added to a standard medical curriculum, naturopathic doctors receive significantly more hours of classroom education than the graduates of many leading medical schools. Would you trust your health to someone who received their degree through the mail?

#### **What is the Scope of Practice for N.D.s?**

Naturopathic physicians are the only primary care physicians clinically trained in a wide variety of natural medicines and therapies. The therapies available to the naturopathic patient are:

- Acupuncture & Traditional Chinese Medicine
- Botanical (Herbal) Medicine
- Lifestyle & Nutritional Counseling
- Constitutional Hydrotherapy
- Physical Medicine & Spinal Manipulation
- Homeopathy
- Allergy Desensitization
- Intravenous Nutrition
- Detoxification & Colonic Therapy
- Drug (prescription) Therapy

*The naturopathic physician treats the 'whole person' – mind, body & spirit – for optimum health.*

#### **How are N.D.s Licensed?**

A licensed naturopathic physician (N.D.) attends a four-year graduate level naturopathic medical school and is educated in all of the same basic sciences as an M.D., and also studies holistic and nontoxic approaches to healing with a strong emphasis on disease prevention and optimizing wellness. A naturopathic physician takes rigorous professional board exams so that he or she may be licensed as a primary care physician by a state or jurisdiction.



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The principles of naturopathic medicine form the matrix upon which a whole and holistic system of healing is built. These principles are:

- *Vis Medicatrix Naturae* – The Healing Power of Nature
- *Primum Non Nocere* – First, Do No Harm
- *Tolle Causam* – Find and Treat the Cause
- *Tolle Totum* – Treat the Whole Person
- *Prevenir* – Prevent Disease
- *Docere* – Physician as Teacher

The major belief is in **the healing power of nature** (*vis medicatrix naturae*). Respect for nature includes honoring our fellow human beings, and our natural healing processes. Naturopathic treatments work in harmony with our body's immune systems to increase our strength and vitality.

Another philosophy underlying naturopathic medicine is to **first do no harm** (*primum non nocere*). The approaches used in treatment are safe, non-invasive, and minimize the risks of side effects.

The third principle is to **find the cause** of a disease (*tolle causam*). Naturopathic physicians honor symptoms as the body's way of communicating deeper problems. They generally do not treat the symptoms, as this would be analogous to fixing the warning light of one's car. When the cause of an illness is addressed, the symptoms leave as well.

Naturopathic physicians **treat the whole person** (*tolle totem*). A patient is unique in his life experiences as well as his genetics. Therefore, disease manifests differently for each individual. Each has his unique complex of physical, emotional, and mental interactions. These interactions out of balance determine one's susceptibility to disease and ability to relinquish it. In order to balance these interactions, the individual should have his appropriate medicine.

Naturopathic medicine also emphasizes **preventative medicine**. If we take responsibility for our life situations, lifestyles, habits, and patterns, we can begin to recognize imbalances and then work to change them for the better. We can prevent minor illnesses from developing into more serious or chronic degenerative diseases.

The last principle of naturopathic medicine is **physician as teacher**. Naturopathic physicians educate their patients about their bodies and how to live healthy lifestyles. Disease not only encourages our innate healing abilities, but also allows us to open up and accept the help and love of others. When this interaction takes place, healing occurs. Then we can share the experience and compassion and catalyze the healing process in others.<sup>1</sup>

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www.scnm.edu  
college 480.858.9100  
clinic 480.970.0000

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<sup>1</sup> With a little guidance from the AANP pamphlet: *Naturopathic Medicine: What it is...What it can do for you!*