

What Is The Difference Between A Naturopathic Physician And A Naturopath

A licensed **naturopathic physician** (N.D.) attends a four-year graduate level naturopathic medical school after completing a minimum of 3 years undergraduate pre-medical studies. A naturopathic physician is educated in all of the same basic sciences as a traditional allopathic medical doctor but also studies holistic and nontoxic approaches to therapy with a strong emphasis on disease prevention and optimizing wellness. In addition to a standard medical curriculum, the naturopathic physician is required to complete four years of training in clinical nutrition, pharmacology, oriental medicine and acupuncture, physical medicine, homeopathic medicine, botanical medicine, psychology, and counseling. A naturopathic physician takes rigorous professional board exams prior to being licensed in a jurisdiction that regulates the practice of naturopathic medicine. A licensed N.D. belongs to a regulatory body that oversees standards of practice, complaints and discipline. Some naturopathic physicians have DEA numbers (authorizations to write prescriptions, even though most do not, but there are occasions in which they are deemed necessary, like prescribing insulin or hormone therapies) and hospital privileges and accept health insurance. Many naturopathic physicians write for peer reviewed medical journals, lecture internationally and are authors of popular natural health books. Naturopathic physicians must carry malpractice insurance, maintain continuing education and practice ethically with a high degree of professionalism.

A **naturopath** is a term that has been used by the general public and other medical professions to sometimes inaccurately refer to what more accurately is a naturopathic physician. The term naturopath nevertheless, has been around for over 100 years. In reality, the words naturopathic physician and naturopath have often been used interchangeably.

In modern times, the term naturopath has been more accurately applied to non-medically trained natural health providers from correspondence/long distance education programs (like Clayton College), short term naturopathy schools, and grandfathered in practitioners of varied backgrounds. Typically, naturopaths practice in unlicensed, unregulated jurisdictions and do not have the same training or privileges as that of a naturopathic physician.

There has been a long history of legal and philosophical disagreements between naturopathic physicians and naturopaths that has only undermined the political and medical progress of naturopathic medicine. Unfortunately, the public has generally not been aware of the differences between the two groups, even though large differences exist.

In Canada, only naturopathic physicians are licensed, regulated and able to practice legally in the provinces that acknowledge naturopathic medicine. In the United States, it is up to individual states to grant licensure to naturopathic physicians. Maryland and Virginia currently do not license naturopathic physicians and thus the public is not as protected as it could be from misrepresentation. The District of Columbia has a registration process for naturopathic physicians and is in the midst of organizing a governing board.

When searching for a qualified expert in natural medicine, be sure to ask for credentials and a current license to practice. Most naturopathic physicians carry licenses in states that offer it and have malpractice insurance. It's your health, be informed & do your homework before you schedule an appointment.

Dr. Veronica Hayduk currently carries her license in Arizona, one of 14 states that offer licensing for naturopathic physicians. You can find other qualified naturopathic physicians at www.naturopathic.org or www.findnd.com. Or visit with Dr. Hayduk directly at www.drveronicahayduk.com.