

## What Is The Difference Between A Naturopathic Doctor And A Naturopath?

A licensed **naturopathic physician or doctor** (N.D.) attended an on campus (not distance, Internet based) four-year graduate level naturopathic medical school program accredited by the US Department of Education. This is only after graduating with a Bachelor's degree or higher and in addition to pre-medical school prerequisites, the same as required by all medical school programs. A naturopathic doctor is educated in all of the same basic sciences as a traditional allopathic medical physician 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 doctor 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 doctor undertakes rigorous professional board exams prior to being licensed in a jurisdiction that regulates the practice of naturopathic medicine. In the state of Maryland, the procedures and requirements to obtain a naturopathic license are the exact same as a medical physician's license.

A licensed N.D. belongs to a regulatory body that oversees standards of practice, complaints and discipline. Some states allow naturopathic doctors to 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 have hospital privileges and/or accept health insurance. Naturopathic doctors must carry malpractice insurance, maintain continuing education classes and practice ethically with a high degree of professionalism.

Many naturopathic doctors write for peer reviewed medical journals, lecture internationally and lead medical research programs. There are naturopathic doctors as lecturers at major universities and medical colleges. Many naturopathic doctors have taken part in massive government funded committees on health care reform along with other primary care professional facilities, policy makers and research departments.

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 or doctor. The term naturopath nevertheless, has been around for over 100 years. In reality, the words naturopathic physician/doctor 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 and grandfathered in practitioners of varied backgrounds. While a naturopath can also be of value in natural healing, they typically, practice in unlicensed, unregulated jurisdictions/states. They do not have the same training or privileges as that of a naturopathic physician/doctor.

There has been a long history of legal and philosophical disagreements between naturopathic physicians/doctors 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 obviously do exist exist.

In the United States, it is up to each individual states to grant licensure to naturopathic doctors. Maryland and Washington, DC currently do have licenses for naturopathic medicine whereas Virginia is in progress.

It can be very confusing when looking at a website if the naturopathic doctor is indeed qualified enough to handle your complex medical issues. When searching for a qualified expert in natural medicine, be sure to ask for credentials and a current license to practice. Naturopathic doctors in unlicensed states do carry licenses, just from another state that offers it. A naturopath would likely not have any license by a state-governing body to practice naturopathic medicine. This license should also be posted in a visible place in his/her office. The visits with any kind of naturopathic provider is likely not going to be 100% covered by insurance so it's your health, be informed & do your homework before you schedule an appointment.

Dr. Veronica Hayduk carries her Maryland license in one of 20 states that offer licensing for naturopathic doctors. You can find other qualified naturopathic doctors at [www.naturopathic.org](http://www.naturopathic.org) or [www.findnd.com](http://www.findnd.com). Or visit with Dr. Hayduk directly at [www.drveronicahayduk.com](http://www.drveronicahayduk.com).