

What is naturopathy?

Naturopathy, sometimes called naturopathic medicine, is based on the belief of vitalism – an idea that special energy (what naturopaths call “vital energy” or “vital force”) is a guiding force that is “different from all the other forces recognized by physics and chemistry,” which “accounts not only for the maintenance of life, but for the development and activities of living organisms such as... the development of an embryo to a living being.”¹ Naturopaths try to encourage natural healing by using naturally occurring substances and minimally invasive methods.² Naturopaths often reject biomedicine and modern science, and instead use nutrition, herbs, manipulation of the body, exercise, stress reduction, and acupuncture to heal.³

Are naturopaths regulated in Washington?

Yes.⁴ In Washington, the Board of Naturopathy licenses and regulates the practice of naturopaths.⁵

Who can be a naturopath?

Individuals must meet certain education and experience requirements. Generally, they must have a degree/diploma from a board-approved college of naturopathic medicine, and must pass an exam to be licensed.⁶ Additionally, to maintain their license, naturopaths must complete ongoing education every year.⁷ The Board, however, has the ability to waive some of these requirements in certain situations.⁸

¹ Sarris, Jerome; Wardle, Jon (2010). Clinical Naturopathy: An evidence-based guide to practice. Sydney: Churchill Livingstone / Elsevier Health Sciences. pp. 32–36. Accessed September 16, 2013, available at: <http://books.google.com/books?id=lpEAJ9vjPyUC&pg=PT32#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

² Boughton, Barbara; Frey, Rebecca J. (2005). "Naturopathic Medicine". Healthline. Gale Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine. Accessed September 16, 2013, available at: <http://www.healthline.com/galecontent/naturopathic-medicine>.

³ Naturopathic Medicine." American Cancer Society. November 1, 2008. Archived from the original on 2010-11-30. Accessed September 16, 2013, available at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20101130114645/http://www.cancer.org/Treatment/TreatmentsandSideEffects/ComplementaryandAlternativeMedicine/MindBodyandSpirit/naturopathic-medicine>.

⁴ RCW 18.36A.

⁵ RCW 18.36A.160.

⁶ WAC 246-836-020; WAC 246-836-030.

⁷ WAC 246-836-080.

⁸ WAC 246-836-120.

How does a physician's role relate to naturopaths?

A physician may recommend parts of naturopathy alongside conventional medicine; for example, a physician may suggest his patients eat a healthy diet to lower the risk of heart disease.⁹ Other naturopathic practices, such as homeopathy, have not been shown by evidence-based studies to effectively treat or cure illness, and in some situations, could actually be harmful to patients.¹⁰

⁹ Naturopathy: An Introduction." NCCAM Pub. No. D372. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health, United States Department of Health and Human Services. March 2012 [Created April 2007]. Accessed September 16, 2013, available at: <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/naturopathy/naturopathyintro.htm?nav=gsa>.

¹⁰ *Id.*