FAQs

A service for consumers from the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) and the Institute for Natural Medicine (INM)

How do naturopathic doctors help address men’s health?

Five key lifestyle changes can add up to 12 years to a man’s life, according to a new Harvard study. But unhealthy lifestyle habits, less frequent screening, and late treatment for preventable chronic diseases all result in men dying at greater rates than women from causes including heart disease, diabetes, accidents, and cancer. In fact, half of American men—who already have lower life expectancy than women—don’t bother with annual checkups. Licensed naturopathic doctors (NDs), with their emphasis on preventive and lifestyle medicine, can help to address some of these disparities. A visit with an ND might appeal more to men who have avoided doctor visits because NDs prioritize natural, non-prescription drug approaches, focus on patient education, and are trained to empower patients to make lifestyle changes for optimal health.

NDs spend extra time with you in appointments to identify underlying causes of your health concerns, and focus on supporting your body’s innate ability to heal.

Here are some key areas of men’s health where NDs specialize:

**Prostate Cancer**

Prostate cancer, which impacts one in six men, is best treated when found early. Education about risk factors—which impact when regular screening should begin and how often it should take place—is essential. Main risk factors include: being African American, aging, family history of prostate cancer, obesity, exposure to certain chemicals, diet, and elevated testosterone levels. Studies show that prevention works and lifestyle factors impact cancer incidence and aggressiveness. If prostate cancer is diagnosed, using naturopathic medicine approaches alongside conventional care can help enhance efficacy, decrease side effects, and help prevent recurrence.

**Sexual Dysfunction**

Sexual dysfunction is a complaint that actually brings men to doctors’ offices. Defined as an inability to attain or maintain an erection adequate for the sexual satisfaction of both partners, sexual dysfunction may also be an indication of other health conditions. For instance, cardiovascular disease with atherosclerosis causes clogging of blood vessels, which can
cause **impotence**. Sexual dysfunction can also be a symptom of **diabetes**, related to poor circulation, or other endocrine system disorders. Side effects of commonly prescribed medications such as antidepressants, antihistamines, and anti-hypertensives can contribute to sexual dysfunction, as can alcohol and drug use. An ND can help you figure out underlying causes, and create a treatment plan that addresses your risk factors or pathology. NDs use a whole body approach, including a prescription for diet and exercise, to help improve circulation. They work with **natural supplements** and with **botanical** medicines.

**Cardiovascular Disease**

**Heart disease**, which remains the number one killer of American men, is largely preventable if caught and treated early. By treating the whole person, naturopathic doctors address the genetic, environmental, and behavioral/lifestyle factors that lead to cardiovascular disease. Learn more in this **FAQ** about naturopathic medicine and heart disease.

**Diabetes**

Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death for men, and a chronic disease that has enormous impact on quality of life. Naturopathic doctors have an extensive **toolkit** to work from in order to help patients with diabetes. Their advanced training in clinical nutrition and behavioral medicine helps individuals make and sustain shifts in lifestyle that can **improve or reverse disease progression**.

**Chronic Pain**

Men often struggle with **chronic pain** from a number of potential sources including injuries, arthritis, fibromyalgia and other causes. Naturopathic doctors excel in non-opioid approaches to chronic pain. By developing personalized pain management treatment plans that include dietary recommendations, nutritional supplements, botanical medicines, physical rehabilitation and mind-body approaches, NDs partner with patients to effectively help reduce pain from inflammation and other causes.

**Depression**

Men may experience depression **differently** than women. For example, some men with depression may experience anger or aggression instead of or in addition to sadness. Men may talk more about the physical symptoms of depression such as fatigue, headaches, or changes in appetite. Prioritizing natural medicine approaches such as behavioral medicine, **nutrition**, **botanical medicine**, **exercise** and selected **nutraceuticals**, NDs help men address depression. NDs are also trained in the pharmacological treatments which are commonly prescribed by conventionally trained MDs. In some states, NDs have authority for prescription pharmaceutical management. They can work in conjunction with conventional mental health specialists to co-manage patient care.

For men seeking care for these common complaints and others, naturopathic doctors have answers based on rigorous training in therapeutic **nutrition**, behavioral medicine, botanical medicine, and an emphasis on addressing underlying causes of disease.