



Giving Life to the Living!™

10 Tips to Finding the Right Naturopathic Doctor

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Naturopathic Doctors use traditional and alternative methods to treat the mind, body and spirit. Growing up you may or may have not been exposed to medicine outside of the pharmaceutical approach. Your visit to the doctor was only when you were sick and you probably were told to listen to the doctor so you can get well soon. All doctors, including Naturopathic Doctors, are in the service industry –it is their job to care, nurture, support and listen to you. If you are not happy with the care you are receiving, should you stay? Should you not question your doctor? Would you stay with a hair dresser if you do not like the haircut? Finding the right doctor is important, you should not be afraid to shop around.

Naturopathic Doctors strive to keep you healthy, their visits are not just for when you are sick. Like any service you are paying for, you want to ensure that you are getting the best quality and the best product. Finding the right Naturopathic Doctor that is best suited for you can be a little confusing. Here are 10 tips to help you make the right choice for your individual needs.

1. **Qualifications.** The paperwork is important. Minimum requirements to become a Naturopathic Doctor is an undergraduate degree (3-4 yr program) and 4 years at a Naturopathic Medical School. Ensure that you are seeing a licensed professional that is registered with their regulating board. In Ontario your Naturopathic Doctor must be registered with the Board of Directors of Drugless Therapy (BDDT-N) in order to practice. In British Columbia, the College of Naturopathic Physicians of British Columbia (CNPBC). In Manitoba, the Manitoba Naturopathic Association. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Association of Naturopathic Practitioners and finally in Alberta, the Alberta Association of Naturopathic Practitioners.
2. **Experience.** Knowing how many years the doctor and or the clinic have been in practice can give an indication of the quality of service you will receive. Look and see if the ND/clinic is busy or sees many patients. NDs beginning their practice and NDs that have been established for years can both have a lot of knowledge, however are the patients turning, are they seeing many new patients and do they have a wait list? How many patients have they seen? How many total patient visits have they had throughout their career?
3. **Reputation.** Keep an ear out for the general opinion of the ND/clinic. Have you heard good things, what sort of results do they get etc...? Ask yourself how you heard about the ND/clinic. Was it a personal referral, word of mouth, advertisement or internet search? Try asking 3 local health food stores (especially in the area the ND/clinic practices in) have they heard of them and would they suggest them? You would not take your car to an untrustworthy mechanic therefore why would you take a gamble with your health? Do your research!
4. **Specialization.** Look to see what the ND/clinic is known for. Are they best suited to address your needs? Do they have special interests in a certain area, do they practice general medicine and are they familiar with your particular health concerns?



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5. **Services and Treatments.** Inquire about all the options they have available. Does the ND/clinic offer any services that are different? Look into the sort of technology, testing and treatment they use. The more tools they have in their tool kit the more resources they can use to get the best job done! Apart from treatments, does the ND/clinic provide you with any other information to help optimize your health? Do they help keep you informed? *Docere*, doctor as teacher, is one important Naturopathic principle. Snoop around their website and look for any evidence that education is important: newsletters, articles, blogs etc...
6. **Availability.** You may have found a great ND but unfortunately their hours never seem to work with your schedule. Look ahead and see when the clinic is open. Are they available, early morning, weekends or evenings?
7. **Facility.** Look on the website for any virtual tours or drive by and take a peek inside. The overall impression of the clinic is very important. You want to feel comfortable in the building and with the atmosphere it provides. Why go eat at a restaurant that you know is not safe?
8. **Team vs. Solo.** Is the clinic private, integrated or multidiscipline? Are there more than one ND/MD practicing at the same location. Is there more than one person working on the same case? The choice of whether to attend a clinic with one or more persons employed at that location is a personal preference however, what is important is the overall clinic dynamic. Do the staff and health care professionals have a good relationship? You want to feel welcomed and that all employees are working together.
9. **Healing Strategy.** Look into the strategy the ND/clinic takes towards healing. You want to be comfortable with the protocol and ensure that it is addressing your needs. Are they attempting to incorporate and condense many factors of disease or are you leaving confused and with a laundry bag of supplements? Is the strategy they are offering innovative and confident? When you visit a doctor you must consider the entire unique experience, from the moment you enter to the moment you leave. Is this the place that is going to address my health concerns and help me live my life? Do you feel better just walking in the door? There are many levels to healing, keep in mind which is best suited for your individual needs.
10. **Cost.** There are many variables to take into consideration when determining if the cost to see your Naturopathic Doctor is appropriate. This may be difficult if this is your first experience paying for health care. Any cost above free would cause you to question, especially if you are used to free health care from the government. First, how long are the visits? The initial visit is often the most extensive and therefore you should feel that there is enough time to complete your entire health history. Most importantly the cost should reflect the other 9 tips. If all of your criteria are met then the cost should be worth the quality. Cost is important and unfortunately it is often the first item we look at. The old saying "you get what you pay for" is true. No one wants to pay an outrageous price for an inexpensive product, or get a great deal on an item that breaks the next day. When it comes to your health you want to trust that you are making the best choice. Find what is right, ask questions and ensure that the cost is evident in the results!