



Getting the Most from Your Medical Visit

An office visit with a naturopathic doctor (ND) is somewhat different from a visit to a conventional medical doctor (MD). Since one of the main principles of naturopathic medicine is getting to the root of your medical issues, naturopathic physicians typically spend more time with you. Ironically, the fact that your ND spends more time with you can lead to some misunderstandings. For example, there is the misperception that all visits with the doctor will be as long as the first one or that the doctor has unlimited time for each visit. This is not the case and, to understand why, we need to touch upon insurance reimbursement.

The medical care you receive is heavily influenced by what your insurance company is willing to pay for. Insurance companies impose many constraints and reimburse only if there is enough documented justification based on complexity of your case, physical exam done, number of symptoms, etc. just like an MD. It is a sad reality that our doctors are constrained in this way by the dictates of the insurance companies and cannot spend as much time with you as they would like or that you feel you may need.

Insurance companies will also only reimburse the doctors for certain medical conditions. A good example of this is mental health issues. While your ND may speak to you about depression, stress, anxiety, and grief because it is important, they are typically not reimbursed for this. This time is essentially donated to you by your naturopathic physician in order for them to secure a good understanding of your medical situation. Also, these issues cannot be the focus of the visit unless you have specific mental health benefits or there is a physical manifestation of the mental health issue such as insomnia.

Insurance reimbursements are structured to reward practitioners who see a large number of patients in a short amount of time. Part of the success of naturopathic medicine, on the other hand, is that we take the time to get to the root of the problem and time to do educational, preventative, and lifestyle-intensive interventions. However, your insurance company does not reimburse for much of this. We absorb the cost of doing these interventions without charging you because we believe they have a tremendously positive impact on your health. But there are limits to what we can do in any one visit. To help us provide optimum care, we suggest the following:

- Please prioritize a maximum of **two** health issues per visit for best results. This will ensure that these issues will get maximal attention. If you feel you have multiple urgent issues or need more time with the doctor, please discuss this with the front desk when scheduling your appointment. We can then be in a better position to schedule your time with the doctor most appropriately.
- Follow up visits are usually 20 or 40 minutes – again, based on the constraints discussed above. In some instances, such as acupuncture or electrotherapy, you may be in the treatment room longer, but generally the doctor will only be available for the allotted time.
- Please present questions and concerns as early as possible in the visit so we can ensure they will be addressed. If you wait till the end of the visit to mention the issue, or have multiple issues that are not prioritized, **we cannot ensure that the issue or issues will be addressed.**
- Please be diligent about following through on directions that will impact your treatment. For example, it is important to be well hydrated for your electrotherapy sessions or to complete requested lab work.

In closing, please be aware that if you ever have any questions or concerns about your health care, please do not hesitate to talk to us about them. The main reason our clinic exists is to be of service to our patients – in other words, to you. Thank you for allow us to assist you with your medical care.