



American Association of Naturopathic Physicians:

Code of Ethics

To provide protection to the general public, a naturopathic physician shall abide by the following code of ethics:

1. **Honesty:** A naturopathic physician shall conduct himself or herself in an honest manner; shall not represent him or herself to patients or the public in an untruthful, misleading, or deceptive manner; and shall not engage in advertising that is false or deceptive.
2. **Improper relationship:** A naturopathic physician shall not engage in sexual relations with a patient unless that patient has been released from the naturopathic physician's care for at least one year. The termination of the physician-patient relationship shall be in writing, and the patient shall understand that the physician-patient relationship has ended.
3. **Privacy:** A naturopathic physician shall maintain patient privacy and confidentiality; provided that if the naturopathic physician becomes aware that a patient is a danger to the public or to her or himself, the naturopathic physician shall take reasonable steps to advise appropriate public officials or agencies of the potential danger, within the guidelines of applicable laws.
4. **Performance:** A naturopathic physician shall perform professional tasks and responsibilities to the best of the naturopathic physician's ability, and standards of care and refrain from engaging in any behavior that will detract from his or her ability to engage in the competent practice of naturopathic medicine.
5. **Obligation:** The fundamental and primary obligation of a naturopathic physician is to the patient, and the maintenance and improvement of the patient's health and well-being.
 - a. A naturopathic physician shall at all times seek to employ methods of diagnosis and therapy that are consistent with naturopathic medical philosophy and principles of practice, scientific principles and evidence, and the naturopathic physician's training and experience, and shall provide patients with information about these diagnostic approaches, therapies and potential alternative diagnostic approaches and therapies so that the patient may give fully informed consent to the recommended diagnostic approaches or treatments.
 - b. As part of the obligation to provide care, a naturopathic physician shall use his or her best efforts to facilitate a patient's access to high quality, safe and reliable medicines, medical devices, diagnostic tests and supplements.
 - c. A naturopathic physician shall offer alternative sources for obtaining the items in subparagraph (5b) as long as those alternative sources do not compromise safety or clinical effectiveness.
 - d. The naturopathic physician shall refrain from recommending medicines or treatments of a secret nature, and shall adequately disclose the contents of medicines or the nature and description of treatments recommended to a patient.

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- e. Furthermore, all therapies shall be monitored by the naturopathic physician in a timely manner utilizing reliable means in order to accurately assess the patient's response to employed treatments.
 - f. A naturopathic physician shall only provide or recommend services that are medically necessary or deemed to be beneficial for an individual patient
6. **Competence:** A naturopathic physician shall maintain proficiency and competence, and be diligent in the provision and administration of patient care.
- a. A naturopathic physician shall recognize and exercise professional judgment within the limits of his or her qualifications, and collaborate with others, seek counsel, or make referrals as appropriate.
 - b. When expanding the naturopathic treatments or services provided to patients, a naturopathic physician shall pursue the appropriate advanced education and training.
 - c. A naturopathic physician shall dedicate sufficient time to each patient in order to provide (to the best of the naturopathic physician's ability) accurate, comprehensive, and individualized patient assessment and treatment.
7. **Discrimination:** A naturopathic physician is free to decide whether or not to provide naturopathic medical care to a particular person, unless confronted with a medical emergency; provided that the naturopathic physician shall not refuse his or her best care if other reasonable options are not available.
- a. A naturopathic physician shall not decline to provide care for a person or discriminate against others on the basis of race, ethnicity, creed, religion, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, or national origin.
 - b. Once the naturopathic physician-patient relationship has begun, the naturopathic physician shall provide care until care is complete, the patient ends the relationship, or the naturopathic physician has discharged the patient from care.
 - c. If a naturopathic physician justifiably desires to end the naturopathic physician-patient relationship, and if continued medical care is appropriate, the naturopathic physician shall document a formal referral to an appropriate health care provider.
8. **Communication:** A naturopathic physician has a duty to not only communicate effectively with a patient, but also to educate the patient and convey relevant information in terms the patient can understand, providing adequate opportunity for the patient to ask questions and discuss matters related to the patient's care.
- a. A naturopathic physician shall transfer a patient's records to another health care provider at the request of the patient, in accordance with appropriate and applicable legal guidelines, in a reasonable and timely fashion, and at reasonable cost.
 - b. A naturopathic physician shall maintain confidentiality of all patient records unless otherwise instructed by the patient or required by law.
 - c. A naturopathic physician shall treat the patient as a respected partner in their health and illness process, and treat with respect communication of the patient's concerns, symptoms, perspectives and medical history as a highly valued resource in determining the individual underlying cause(s) of the patient's illness or ill health.
9. **Conflicts of interest:** If a naturopathic physician is faced with a conflict of interest, the conflict shall be resolved in the best interest of the patient.
- a. If a naturopathic physician has any financial interests that may conflict with appropriate medical care, the naturopathic physician shall disclose those interests to the patient.
 - b. A naturopathic physician who makes written or oral public statements concerning specific products sold by a company from which the naturopathic physician receives compensation, or in which the naturopathic physician holds an ownership interest, shall disclose this financial relationship in those public statements.

10. **Improper conduct:** A naturopathic physician shall not prescribe, provide, or seek compensation for medical services that are not specifically indicated for an individual patient.
11. **Influence:** A naturopathic physician shall not exert influence over a patient to undertake any action that is contrary to the patient's best interest.
12. **Accepting gifts:** A naturopathic physician shall not accept gifts from any individual or entity that are deemed to influence the naturopathic physician's professional clinical judgment.

The failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section shall subject a member to reprimand or revocation of membership in the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians.