

What Is a Nurse Practitioner?

A nurse practitioner (NP) is a registered nurse (RN) who has completed advanced education (a minimum of a master's degree) and training in the diagnosis and management of common medical conditions, including chronic illnesses.

Nurse practitioners provide a broad range of health care services. They provide some of the same care provided by physicians and maintain close working relationships with physicians. A NP can serve as a patient's regular primary care provider (PCP). Nurse practitioners see patients of all ages.

The core philosophy of the field is individualized care. Nurse practitioners focus on patients' conditions as well as the effects of illness on the lives of the patients and their families. NPs make prevention, wellness, and patient education priorities. This can mean fewer prescriptions and less expensive treatments. If prescriptions are needed, NPs in most states are able to prescribe most medications as well as narcotics.

Informing patients about their health care and encouraging them to participate in decisions are central to the care provided by NPs. In addition to health care services, NPs conduct research and are often active in patient advocacy activities. (Source: www.womenshealthchannel.com)