

# What is a Nurse Practitioner?

## **What are Nurse Practitioners (NPs)?**

NPs are advanced practice nurses who provide high-quality healthcare services similar to those of a physician. NPs diagnose and treat a wide range of health problems. They have a unique approach and stress both *care and cure*. Besides clinical care, NPs focus on health promotion, disease prevention, health education and counseling. They help patients make wise health and lifestyle choices. They are truly your Partners in Health.

## **How long have NPs been providing health care?**

NPs have provided excellent health care for more than 45 years. The first NPs were educated at the University of Colorado in 1965. Programs soon spread across the U.S. As of 2010, there are about 135,000 practicing NPs. Close to 8,000 new NPs are prepared each year at over 325 colleges and universities.

## **How are NPs educated?**

NPs have graduate, advanced education and clinical training beyond their registered nurse preparation. Most have master's degrees and many have doctorates.

## **Where are NPs licensed to practice and how are they licensed?**

NPs are licensed in all states and the District of Columbia. They practice under the rules and regulations of the state in which they are licensed. Most NPs are nationally certified in their specialty area and are recognized as expert healthcare providers. The faith that patients have in NPs is shown by the almost 600 million visits made to NPs each year.

## **Where do NPs practice?**

NPs practice in rural, urban, and suburban communities. They practice in many types of settings. These include clinics, hospitals, emergency rooms, urgent care sites, private physician or NP practices, nursing homes, schools, colleges, and public health departments, to name a few.

## **What services do NPs provide?**

From treating illness to advising patients on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, NPs provide a full range of services. Patients who see NPs report an extremely high level of satisfaction with the care they receive.

Among the many services that NPs provide, they:

- Order, perform and interpret diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays
- Diagnose and treat acute and chronic conditions: diabetes, high blood pressure, infections & injuries
- Prescribe medications and other treatments
- Manage patients' overall care
- Spend time counseling patients
- Help patients learn how their actions affect their health and well-being

NPs specialize in many areas, including:

- Acute Care
- Adult Health
- Family Health
- Gerontology Health
- Neonatal Health
- Oncology
- Pediatric/Child Health
- Psychiatric/Mental Health
- Women's Health

NPs also often practice in sub-specialty areas such as:

- Allergy & Immunology
- Cardiovascular
- Dermatology
- Emergency and Urgent Care
- Endocrinology
- Gastroenterology
- Hematology & Oncology
- Neurology
- Occupational Health
- Orthopedics
- Pulmonology & Respiratory
- Sports Medicine
- Urology