

If you are not familiar with Nurse Practitioners and their role, the following information may be helpful. (Adapted from the American College of Nurse Practitioners)

What is a Nurse Practitioner?

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are registered professional nurses who are prepared, through advanced graduate education and clinical training, to provide a wide range of health care services, including the diagnosis and management of common, as well as complex, medical conditions to individuals of all ages.

Nurse Practitioners have been providing quality care for patients since 1965. Today there are over 150,000 NPs nationwide practicing in a variety of settings, for example, primary care provider offices, urgent care centers, employee health centers, universities, student health centers, school health clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, clinics, and private offices. Wherever health care may be given, nurse practitioners may be found.

Credentialing for Practice

- Licensure as a Registered Nurse
- Graduate education (Master's or Doctoral) with preparation in the NP role and at least one population specialty
- National Board certification in neonatal, pediatric, family, women's health, adult, geriatric, psychiatric or acute care
- Hospital credentialing for privileges to provide services in the facility.

Practice

Nurse Practitioners provide comprehensive care within an area of specialization and can:

- **Evaluate** an individual's health by taking a history, performing a physical examination and ordering and interpreting results from appropriate laboratory and diagnostic tests/procedures;
- **Diagnose** health and medical conditions by reviewing all available health information, and applying advanced clinical decision making processes;
- **Manage health problems** by developing an individualized plan of care, prescribing medications or treatments, obtaining consultations and referrals, and coordinating health care services;
- **Promote health** by ordering screenings, prescribing preventive therapies (vaccinations, diets, exercise, etc.) and teaching and counseling of individuals, families, and groups;
- **Collaborate** with patients and families, and other health care providers.

Regulation

Nurse Practitioners practice within the scope of their state's nurse practice act. They are legally authorized to provide comprehensive care management, including prescribing medications. In many states NPs own and practice in their own offices. Nurse practitioners may admit to hospitals and may be on call to respond to urgent patient needs 24/7.

Quality of Care

Extensive research has been conducted to evaluate the quality and safety of care provided by nurse practitioners. These studies have demonstrated that the outcomes of care provided by NPs are comparable to and in some cases exceed those of physicians.