



Practice Standard: Immunization

Applies to Naturopathic Physicians

The College of Complementary Health Professionals of BC was created on June 28, 2024 through the amalgamation of four health regulatory colleges:

- College of Chiropractors of BC
- College of Massage Therapists of BC
- College of Naturopathic Physicians of BC
- College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of BC

All current requirements for standards of clinical and ethical practice issued by the four colleges remain in place upon amalgamation.

This document was created by the College of Naturopathic Physicians of BC and will be updated to reflect the amalgamation.

Practice Standard

Immunization

Practice Standards set out requirements for specific aspects of a naturopathic doctors' practice. They link with other standards, policies, and bylaws of the College of Naturopathic Physicians of BC, and all legislation relevant to the practice of naturopathic medicine.

This standard clarifies the College's position on naturopathic physicians' responsibilities regarding communications about immunization.

Patients have a right to make decisions about their health care. Naturopathic physicians may encounter patients who are concerned about, or reluctant to obtain, immunizations for themselves or their children. Naturopathic physicians are a resource for patients and are obligated to maintain up-to-date scientific knowledge so that they may assist their patients in making healthcare decisions.

"Anti-vaccination" counselling and/or marketing prohibited

Naturopathic doctors **must not**:

1. counsel a patient, and/or a patient's parents or guardians, against obtaining immunizations and/or vaccinations in the absence of a sound and properly documented medical rationale for doing so;
2. provide patients and/or the public at large with "anti-vaccination" and/or "anti-immunization" materials or materials regarding potential risks and harms of vaccinations, whether online or in print, other than those materials that would be necessary to obtain informed consent to immunizations;
3. feature "anti-vaccination" and/or "anti-immunization" content in their advertising and/or marketing materials, including websites and social media platforms, including but not limited to:
 - a. articles from scientific, peer-reviewed publications that have been discredited since the time of publication; and/or
 - b. other content that promotes the refusal of immunizations, vaccinations or the use of "alternatives" to immunizations or vaccinations, including materials written by

third parties.

Registrants are reminded that 100(2) of the College's bylaws prohibits marketing and/or advertising that is false, inaccurate, reasonably capable of misleading the public, unverifiable, or contrary to the public interest in the practice of the profession. Marketing is considered to violate section 100(2) of the College's bylaws if it is calculated or likely to take advantage of the weakened state, whether physical, mental or emotional, of the recipient or intended recipient, or if it is likely to create in the mind of the recipient or intended recipient an unjustified expectation about the results which the registrant can achieve.

Advertisement of "alternatives" to vaccinations prohibited

Naturopathic physicians **must not** advertise, offer, promote, provide, or recommend alternatives to vaccinations or immunizations. Prohibited phrases include but are not limited to "flu shot alternative," "natural flu shot," "homeopathic vaccination," and "natural immunization."

Standards of practice for patient consultations

1. When discussing immunizations with a patient, parent or guardian, naturopathic physicians must:
 - a) Document the occurrence of a discussion regarding immunization within the patient's clinical record, noting the parent or guardian's name, if applicable;
 - b) Counsel the patient (or parent or guardian), to the best of their ability and knowledge, about the benefits and risks associated with immunization or the lack thereof, so that the patient can make an informed decision; and
 - c) Document the details of the discussion, including the rationale for providing any specific advice, within the patient's clinical record.

2. When discussing immunizations with a patient, parent or guardian, naturopathic physicians **must** convey the following information:
 - a) naturopathic treatments are not guaranteed to prevent the childhood diseases or infections that are targeted by vaccines;
 - b) there is an inherent risk of contracting the disease or infection if the patient is not conventionally immunized; and
 - c) naturopathic treatment is not a substitute for the efficacy or security of an immunization.

3. When discussing immunizations with a patient, parent or guardian, naturopathic doctors must review the following vaccine information contained in HealthLinkBC Files or other provincial resources, if applicable, as recommended in the *BC Centre for Disease Control's*

*Communicable Disease Control Immunization Program:*¹

- a) Benefits of vaccination (personal, community)
 - b) Risk of not getting vaccinated (possibility of getting the disease)
 - c) Eligibility for the vaccine(s)
 - d) Common and expected adverse events
 - e) Possible serious or severe adverse events and their frequency
 - f) Contraindications
 - g) Disease(s) being prevented
4. If a patient, parent or guardian decides not to immunize, and before administering any naturopathic treatments, a naturopathic physician must document the decision, confirming that the discussion included the requirements set out above, and attempt to obtain a signed informed consent that includes this information. If the consent form is more than one page, the patient (or parent or guardian) must initial each page. The original signed consent form must be retained for the clinical record, and the patient (or parent or guardian) must be provided with a copy.

Only registrants who have met the standards and requirements for College [certification in Immunization](#), and who maintain this certification with the College, are authorized to prescribe or administer vaccines.

Naturopathic doctors with questions about their obligations regarding immunization may contact the College at 604-688-8236 or questions@cnpsc.bc.ca.

Updated May 25, 2018

Disclaimer

In the event of any inconsistency between this standard and any legislation that governs the practice of naturopathic doctors, the legislation shall govern.

¹ For more details, see the BC CDC Communicable Disease Control Immunization Program – Section 1B – Informed Consent for Immunization, available online: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/communicable-disease-control-manual/immunization>