

Nurse Practitioners

Who are nurse practitioners? What do they do?

In Ontario, Registered Nurses in the Extended Class, also known as Nurse Practitioners (NPs), are registered nurses with additional education and experience who are able to order and interpret diagnostic tests, communicate diagnoses, prescribe pharmaceuticals and perform specific procedures.

NPs practice nursing, the goal of which is to restore, maintain and advance the health of individuals, groups or communities. NPs use a holistic approach, grounded in research. They emphasize health promotion as well as illness/injury prevention and complement rather than replace the care delivered by other health providers. In addition to providing a wide range of health care services to patients, NPs also help patients to access other health and social services that they may require.

NPs work collaboratively with many other health professionals. In particular, they consult with physicians, as required by the needs of their patients.

Primary Health Care NPs

Primary Health Care NPs generally work in community settings and provide general primary health care services to people of all ages. For many people, primary health care NPs are their first and most frequent point of contact with the health care system. Examples of the types of health care services provided by primary health care NPs include:

- Annual physicals;
- Patient counselling (e.g., mental health, family planning, medication compliance);
- Health promotion (e.g., smoking cessation);
- Immunization against disease, screening for diseases;
- Treatment for short-term acute illnesses (e.g., infections, minor injuries);
- Monitor patients with stable chronic illnesses (e.g., diabetes);
- Referrals to other health care services (e.g, home care services);
- Referrals to social services (e.g., housing supports).