



## What is a Nurse Practitioner?

A nurse practitioner, often called an “NP” for short, is an advanced practice registered nurse who has completed graduate level education such as a master’s or a doctoral degree. All NPs in California are registered nurses licensed by the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) who have completed additional education and training, and have an expanded scope of practice over the traditional registered nurse role.

### Components of Practice

- Diagnosing, treating, evaluating and managing acute and chronic illness and disease (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure)
- Obtaining medical histories and conducting physical examinations
- Ordering, performing and interpreting diagnostic studies (e.g., routine lab tests, x-rays, EKGs)
- Prescribing physical therapy and other rehabilitation treatments
- Prescribing and furnishing medications for acute and chronic illness
- Providing prenatal care and family planning services
- Providing child wellness care, including screening and immunizations
- Providing primary, specialty and health maintenance care for adults, including annual physicals and certifying disability
- Providing care for patients in acute and critical care settings
- Performing or assisting in minor surgeries and procedures (e.g., dermatological biopsies, suturing, casting)
- Counseling and educating patients on health behaviors, self-care skills and treatment options

To become licensed to practice in California, NPs must complete an accredited NP program and be certified by the BRN. NPs specialize in many areas, including:

Acute Care  
Adult Health  
Family Health  
Emergency Services

Gerontology  
Neonatal Health  
Oncology

Pediatric / Child Health  
Psychiatric / Mental Health  
Women’s Health

NP training programs were first developed over 40 years ago due to a shortage of physicians. State governments sought innovative ways to meet the growing demand for primary health care services. Out of that demand, the NP profession has grown to fill an important and vital role in America’s health care system. Working hand-in-hand with other licensed health care professionals, NPs improve the responsiveness and efficiency of our health care system. Because of their focus on primary care, disease prevention and counseling, NPs serve as exclusive providers of primary care for many families. There are more than 18,000 NPs in California and more than 170,000 practicing NPs nationwide. Nearly 9,000 new NPs are trained each year at over 325 colleges and universities.

### Where You May Find an NP

Community clinics, health centers, urgent care centers  
Home health care agencies  
Hospitals and hospital clinics  
Hospice care  
Skilled nursing facilities

Medical groups and private health care practices  
Public health departments  
School / college clinics  
Veterans Administration facilities  
Emergency room settings

For more information about nurse practitioners, please visit the California Association for Nurse Practitioners’ website at [canpweb.org](http://canpweb.org) or call us at (916) 441-1361.