



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 are registered nurses licensed by the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) who have completed additional education, training and have an expanded scope of practice over the traditional registered nurse role.

Scope 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, bone x-rays, EKGs)
- Prescribing physical therapy and other rehabilitation treatments
- Prescribing and Furnishing drugs 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 option

To become licensed to practice, NPs must complete an accredited NP program. NPs specialize in many areas, including:

Acute Care	Gerontology	Pediatric / Child Health
Adult Health	Neonatal Health	Psychiatric / Mental Health
Family Health	Oncology	Women’s Health
Emergency Services		

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	Medical groups and private health care practices
Home health care agencies	Public health departments
Hospitals and hospital clinics	School / college clinics
Hospice care	Veterans Administration facilities
Skilled nursing Facilities	Emergency room settings

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