

What is a Nurse Practitioner?

- A nurse practitioner (NP) is an experienced registered nurse with advanced practice knowledge and skills
- NPs are autonomous practitioners who work in complementary and collaborative relationships with physicians and other members of the health care team
- NP's practice within a fixed scope of practice, which means there are set limitations to what they can and can't do
- NP's are authorized to communicate a diagnosis for certain conditions, order some lab tests, x-rays and ultrasounds (from a set list)
- NP's are able to prescribe a range of medications (from a set list)
- Some examples of what NPs can do:
 - General care: immunizations, flu shots, TB skin tests, forms (OW, ODSP, driver's medical, etc)
 - Episodic illness: colds, flu, upset stomach, diarrhea, bronchitis, chest infections, eye/ear/throat infections, bladder infections, sprains and muscle strains, injuries, etc.
 - Monitoring stable conditions: once the condition is stable, the NP can help monitor chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, thyroid problems
 - Women's health: annual physicals, pap tests, breast screening, prenatal care, postnatal care, birth control issues, irregular periods, vaginal infections, sexually transmitted infections, HIV testing, etc.
 - Men's health: annual physicals, testicular and prostate screening, sexually transmitted infections and treatment, HIV testing etc.

NP's are responsible to consult with a physician when they encounter a situation that is beyond their scope of practice

- Some examples of visits that are outside the scope of practice of the NP and should be booked with the physician:
 - Diagnosing and treating illness: migraines, abdominal pain, pelvic pain, undiagnosed fever, joint pain and swelling, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, mental health problems, etc.
 - Diagnosis and treating chronic conditions: diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, asthma, epilepsy, thyroid concerns, and adjusting medications if necessary
 - Problems at any point in pregnancy: bleeding, pelvic pain, swelling, high blood pressure, gestational diabetes
 - Referral to specialists: if a referral is found to be necessary, it must come from a physician