

## Natural Medicine

For thousands of years people and animals have been using plants from their surroundings to remedy ailments.

Natural Medicine (also referred to as Complimentary or Alternative Medicine) encompasses treatment modalities such as herbal medicine(or phyto-therapy), homeopathy, nutrition, flower essences, bio-energetic treatments (reiki, acupuncture, massage) aromatherapy,supplements and lifestyle advice.

Natural Medicines focus on the state of “wellness” and preservation of the healthy state. Considerations of the mind, soul and physical self are important in achieving wellness and practitioners will look for the “reason behind the reason” for a person becoming unwell.

By contrast Conventional Medicine (or Western Medicine) predominately utilizes pharmaceuticals and surgery in its management of disease. Rarely is the focus on the well-state and almost always reactive ie; once a disease has manifested. Pharmaceuticals, despite having their origins often in the plant world, are synthesized for mass production and for compound exactness. In doing so, many pharmaceutical have side effects and can cause adverse reactions.

Although natural medicine are also pharmacologically active they are usually safer and more “pure” than conventional medicines.

A good way to demonstrate the differences in approach is to consider the treatment of someone with sinusitis. The conventional or medical approach would be to control symptoms by starting an over-the-counter antihistamine and decongestant, then low dose corticosteroid nasal spray, if the problem deteriorates, then referral to a ENT specialist would occur with possible surgery.

The natural practitioner’s approach may include removal of any substances from the diet that might be aggravating the problem (often dairy and wheat), settle the pain and congestion, decrease the allergic response and boost the immunity using herbs/homeopathics/supplement. Things such as garlic, horseradish, Vitamin C, Echinacea and eyebright are effective ways of achieving good sinusitis control aswell as sinus massage, steam baths and herbal teas.

So as you can see, one way is very reactive and often carries side effects while the other is seeking long term resolution and has few side effects. The best medicine seems to be living a “natural” life where possible and seeking western intervention when necessary, ie when the natural way doesn’t work.

To stay healthy requires a decision to be HEALTHY.

If you can commit to little achievable things every day (eg drinking water, eating omega 3 rich foods, paying attention to stress reduction and going out of your way to feel HAPPY), then you should live a very happy and enjoyable life.

There are many natural medicine practitioners around. Find a reputable one. Call the registry bodies (in Australia there is ATMS, or ANTA for naturopaths and masseuses). Acupunturists, osteopaths, chiropractors all have their own affiliate bodies. This way you are at least seeing someone who has done specialized training, is required to maintain a degree of education each year and usually is endorsed my private health companies for health rebates.