

*The Voice of the Nurse Practitioner®***What is a nurse practitioner?**

Nurse practitioners (NPs) have been providing primary, acute and specialty health care to patients of all ages and walks of life for nearly half a century. As clinicians who blend clinical expertise in diagnosing and treating health conditions with an added emphasis on disease prevention and health management, NPs assess patients, order and interpret diagnostic tests, make diagnoses, and initiate and manage treatment plans — including prescribing medications. NPs are the health care providers of choice for millions of patients. An NP is truly *Your Partner in Health*.

**What education and clinical training do NPs have?**

The first NPs were educated at the University of Colorado in 1965. Programs soon spread across the U.S. Recent estimates account for approximately 171,000 practicing NPs today. Close to 14,000 new NPs are prepared each year at over 325 colleges and universities. All NPs must complete a master's or doctoral degree program and have advanced clinical training beyond their initial professional registered nurse preparation. Didactic and clinical courses prepare nurses with specialized knowledge and clinical competency to practice in primary care, acute care and long-term health care settings.

**Where are NPs licensed, and where are their practice locations?**

NPs are licensed in all states and the District of Columbia and practice under the rules and regulations of the state in which they are licensed. They provide high-quality care in rural, urban and suburban communities and in many types of settings including clinics, hospitals, emergency rooms, urgent care sites, private physician or NP practices, nursing homes, schools, colleges and public health departments.

**What services do NPs provide?**

Autonomously and in collaboration with health care professionals and other individuals, NPs provide a full range of primary, acute and specialty health care services, including:

- Ordering, performing and interpreting diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays;
- Diagnosing and treating acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections and injuries;
- Prescribing medications and other treatments;
- Managing patients' overall care;
- Counseling and educating patients on health promotion and disease prevention.

**What sets NPs apart from other health care providers?**

A unique emphasis on the health and well-being of the whole person sets NPs apart from other providers. NPs guide patients in making smarter health and lifestyle choices, which may provide the following benefits.

- **Lower health-care costs** – By providing high-quality care and counseling, NPs can lower the cost of health care for patients. For example, patients who see an NP as their primary care provider often have fewer emergency room visits, shorter hospital stays and lower medication costs.
- **Patient satisfaction** – Patients report an extremely high level of satisfaction with the care they receive.
- **Primary care shortage solution** – By offering high-quality, cost-effective, patient-centered health care, NPs provide approximately 171,000 solutions to the primary care shortage facing America today.

## Key Facts about NPs

- There are approximately 171,000 nurse practitioners (NPs) practicing in the U.S.
- An estimated 14,000 new NPs completed their academic programs in 2011-2012.
- 93% of NPs have graduate degrees.
- 97% of NPs maintain national certification.
- 18% of NPs practice in rural or frontier settings.
- 88% of NPs are prepared in primary care and 68% of NPs practice in at least one primary care site.
- 87% of NPs see patients covered by Medicare and 84% by Medicaid.
- 43% of NPs hold hospital privileges and 15% have long-term care privileges.
- 97% of NPs prescribe medications, averaging 19 prescriptions per day.
- NPs hold prescriptive privilege in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., with the ability to prescribe controlled substances in 48 states.
- The early-2011 mean, full-time NP base salary was \$91,310, with average full-time NP total income at \$98,760.
- 60% of NPs see three to four patients per hour, while 7% see over five patients per hour.
- The average NP is female (96%) and 48 years old; she has been in practice for 12.8 years as a family NP (49%).
- Patients whose primary care providers are NPs have fewer emergency room visits and shorter hospital stays, resulting in lower out-of-pocket costs.