

Naturopathic care can improve blood sugar, mood in diabetes

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A new joint study by Group Health Research Institute and Bastyr University Research Institute found that type 2 diabetes patients who received naturopathic care (as an adjunct to conventional care) had lower blood-sugar levels, better eating and exercise habits, improved moods, and a stronger sense of control over their condition than did patients receiving only conventional care.

The findings, published today in [BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#), show that complementary and [alternative medicine](#) (CAM) may have several positive effects on people with [type 2 diabetes](#), which affects nearly 26 million Americans.

"The news is encouraging for those fighting the disease," said Ryan Bradley, ND, MPH, director of the Center for Diabetes and Cardiovascular Wellness at Bastyr University and its clinic, the Bastyr Center for Natural Health. "Patients involved in the study cited the benefits of trying different approaches to find the best ways to minimize the effects of type 2 diabetes. In many ways, that strategy mirrors our partnership with [Group Health](#) in this research study—working together to discover the best possible solutions."

Forty study participants received counseling on diet, exercise, and glucose monitoring from four naturopathic physicians (NDs) in addition to conventional diabetes care from their medical doctors, including prescription medications. Many of the participants also received stress-management care and dietary supplements. Researchers then compared

these 40 participants with 329 patients receiving only conventional diabetes care.

In six months and about four naturopathic treatment visits, participants demonstrated improved self-care, more consistent monitoring of glucose, and improved moods. Hemoglobin A1c rates (a measure of blood-sugar control) were nearly a full percentage point lower for those patients. This compares with a drop of only 0.5 percent over the same time period for 329 clinically similar patients receiving only conventional diabetes care. The encouraging findings from this small observational study will need to be confirmed by a randomized trial with larger numbers of participants, according to Dr. Bradley.

Finding more effective ways of treating type 2 diabetes is important because it is one of the top-10 causes of death in Americans and is costly to treat: \$1 out of every \$10 spent on health care in the United States is used to fight type 2 [diabetes](#), at a cost of \$178 billion every year.

"Our number-one goal is to help patients," added Daniel Cherkin, PhD, a senior investigator at Group Health Research Institute. "Collaboration with our research colleagues at Bastyr University allows us to explore a broader range of ways to help meet the needs of our patients."

Provided by Group Health Research Institute

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