

## Holistic Nursing

Holistic nursing is a medical specialty that takes the entire being of the patient into consideration, rather than just diagnosing specific physical symptoms. Holistic nurses often recommend complementary medical treatments to assist patients in attaining better health. The nurse becomes a partner with patients by forging interpersonal and lasting relationships. Nurses who are trained in holistic healthcare practices often work in hospice settings and long-term care facilities.

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) is said to be one of the first acknowledged holistic nurses. She was known as “The Lady of the Lamp” because she brought comforting light and a gentle smile to war-wounded soldiers. As a nurse, she was efficient and thorough, but she also treated each patient as an individual whose personal needs mattered -- the definition of a holistic nurse.

Holistic nursing should not be considered an alternative to modern medicine, but rather an adjunct for improved health care. The holistic nurse is a degreed professional registered nurse (RN) or licensed practical nurse (LPN), with an additional education in holistic nursing, usually a certificate or a degree. In addition to assessing the patient’s physical condition, holistic nurses will review the patient’s history and immediate environment. They may inquire about stress levels, family relationships, work history, upbringing, religious affiliation, and any other aspect that might affect the patient’s life. When used as a complement to traditional medicine, holistic nursing can include several alternative healthcare treatments, depending on the specific malady. The patient is carefully evaluated and the nurse recommends a particular combination of treatments. Holistic healthcare practices include aromatherapy, shiatsu massage, yoga, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), meditation, hypnotherapy, energy healing, and many other modalities.

Nutrition and body cleansing play an important part in holistic nursing. Macrobiotic diets and food combining may be prescribed, sometimes in combination with hydrotherapy (water therapy). The patient may be encouraged to partake in a nutritious diet to help flush harmful toxins from the body and increase energy levels. Additionally, holistic nurses will sometimes practice colonic hydrotherapy, also known as high colonics, where toxins are flushed from the bowels with injections of water.

Many hospitals and clinics employ holistic nurses. They provide patients with human caring and a respect for their personal dignity that is sometimes lacking elsewhere in the healthcare industry. Holistic nursing can be especially effective with terminally ill and long-term patients. The nurses form a personal bond that also extends to the patient’s family and friends to help ease the stress caused by illness. Holistic nursing offers a welcome alternative view of healthcare along with excellent, traditional nursing care.

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