

## Functional medicine explained

While you may have heard of integrative and holistic medicine, the term functional medicine may be new to you. At the core of functional medicine is the belief that each person is an individual with a unique body chemistry and distinct living conditions — everyone lives and works in different environments, eats different diets, has different stressors.

Each of the things that makes a person different is a part of a puzzle that functional medicine doctors can tap into not only to diagnose and treat disease, but also to prevent it. Here are five benefits of functional medicine.

### 1. Focuses on root cause of disease, not symptoms

Instead of focusing on relieving symptoms, functional medicine seeks to treat your condition by discovering and addressing the root cause. But functional medicine takes it one step further.

One of the core principles behind functional medicine is that once you understand the cause of an illness, you're armed with the knowledge to obtain wellness or prevent disease in the first place through making lifestyle changes. The ultimate goal of functional medicine is to optimize health.

### 2. Science-based and effective

Functional medicine is science-based, relying on the collection of data to determine the underlying reason or reasons why a patient suffers from a particular condition.

A functional medicine practitioner develops a complete picture of a patient through a deep dive into medical history as well as the patient's

genetic, biochemical, and lifestyle factors, physiology, and how they live. And the same data can be used to effectively track the progress of a treatment plan.

### 3. Highly personalized and patient-focused

Because functional medicine aggregates so much specific information about the patient, the resulting treatment plan is highly personalized. This approach speaks volumes to walking the walk and acknowledging that two patients can have the same illness that manifests differently due to their differences, and therefore their treatment plan should be dialed in just for them.

Simply put, functional medicine focuses on the patient in order to develop personalized treatment plans that ultimately lead to improved outcomes.

### 4. Takes a thorough, multi-disciplinary approach

Another benefit of functional medicine is that because it involves so many facets of a patient's life, it's multi-disciplinary by its very nature addressing the offending condition from a variety of fronts. A functional medicine treatment may include medications as well as herbal or botanical supplements, vitamins, and detox programs.

Not only that, but functional medicine treatment plans often integrate integrative medicine modalities like acupuncture while also including lifestyle recommendations to enhance nutrition, movement, sleep, and stress management.

### 5. Provides a road map for overall health

Perhaps the greatest benefit is that because a functional medicine approach allows you to gain such a thorough understanding of why a

patient suffers from a certain condition, the information can be reverse engineered to provide key data for the maintenance of overall health and an important tool for preventive care.

Is functional medicine right for you?

If you're among the 133 million Americans who suffer from a chronic condition, you know how frustrating treating your condition can be. Sometimes it may seem like a crazy game of whack-a-mole where your doctor prescribes different medications to relieve your symptoms until finding one that works. When your body no longer responds to the drug, the process starts again until you get a new one. And the vicious cycle continues.