



HEALTHCARE CAREER BUZZ



Dietician Careers

[By Roshan Tolani]

Dietitians are healthcare experts who prepare food and nutrition programs and facilitate the preparation and serving of meals. They suggest modifications to diet habits, promote healthy food habits, and help prevent and treat diseases.

Dietitians counsel individuals directly or through schools, hospitals, and other institutions. In addition to personal counseling, dietitians also promote awareness of diet and nutrition through seminars, media reports, and by distributing promotional literature.

Major Areas of Practice

Depending on their education and experience, dietitians work in different capacities at different institutions. The following are the major areas of practice for dietitians.

Clinical dietitians: They plan meals for hospital patients. After evaluating patients' nutritional needs, clinical dietitians develop and implement nutrition programs for them and analyze and report the findings. In consultation with doctors, they coordinate patients' medical and nutritional needs. At some institutions, clinical dietitians also manage food service departments.

Community dietitians: They assess the nutritional requirements of individuals and their families and suggest measures to prevent diseases and promote good health. Community dietitians work at public health clinics, fitness centers, home health agencies, and health maintenance organizations.

Management dietitians: They supervise and direct large-scale food planning

and preparation at healthcare facilities, restaurants, prisons, industrial plants, schools, and military bases. Management dietitians employ, train, and advise other dietitians and workers involved with food service. It is their responsibility to ensure that safety and sanitary guidelines are followed and to ensure that meals are nutritious.

Consultant dietitians: They either have their own practices or are contracted by healthcare facilities. Consultant dietitians conduct nutrition tests for their clients and advise them on diet-related concerns such as weight loss and cholesterol reduction.

Research dietitians: They study the effects of different diets on different groups of people and research the dietary needs of older people, children, etc. Universities, medical centers, food preparation plants, and other institutions employ research dietitians.

Dietetic educators: They teach the principles and practical aspects of dietetics to medical, nursing, dental, or other dietetic students. At smaller institutions, dietitians' roles may be combinations of the above roles.

Work Conditions

Increased awareness of nutrition issues has led to more job opportunities for dietitians. Most dietitians, as part of medical teams, are engaged in the treatment and prevention of diseases. Registered dietitians are

employed at clinics, HMOs, or healthcare facilities.

Many dietitians choose academic and research careers. Other dietitians work in the food and nutrition industry, journalism, and other non-traditional areas.

Education and Training

To start a career in dietetics, one needs at least a bachelor's degree. A major in food and nutrition or food service management is often helpful.

One can become a certified registered dietitian (RD) by completing one of the training programs offered by the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and by passing a test given by the ADA. However, registration requirements vary widely by state. Of the 46 states that have laws governing dietetics, 31 require licensure, 14 require certification, and one requires registration.

People who aspire to dietitian careers can gain supervised practice experience in two ways: the first is to complete a six-to-12 month Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE)-accredited program. The second way is to complete 900 hours of supervised practice experience through any one of the 265 CADE-accredited internships.

To work as a registered dietitian, every five years one needs a minimum of 75 credit



HEALTHCARE CAREER BUZZ

hours of approved continuing-education classes.

People interested in dietetic research need to acquire advance degrees. Some dietitians specialize in renal, diabetic, or cardiovascular dietetics. CDR, the credentialing agency for ADA, and some other medical and nutrition organizations award these certifications. Industries and organizations do value these certificates, but they are not required.

Salaries

Though salaries depend on many factors such as education, practice, and organizations' geographic locations and sizes, the following are the annual median salaries of registered dietitians in 2005:

- \$53,800-consultation and business
- \$60,000-food and nutrition management
- \$60,200-education and research
- \$48,800-clinical nutrition/ambulatory care
- \$50,000-clinical nutrition/long-term care
- \$44,800-community nutrition
- \$45,000-clinical nutrition/acute care
- (American Dietetic Association)

ON THE NET

Dietitians and Nutritionists
www.bls.gov/oco/ocos077.htm

Dietitian and Nutritionist: Career Information
72.14.235.104/search?q=cache:sRXjB9nKzIIJ:careerplanning.about.com/cs/occupations/p/dietitian.htm+career+as+a+dietician&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=13&gl=in

Career as a Dietician and Nutritionist
careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/342/Dietitian-Nutritionist.html

Dietitian/Nutritionist
www.explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career.5.aspx

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.