

Who are Registered Dietitian Nutritionists and Nutrition Scientists?

With all the nutrition information available today how do you know what to believe? Who should you trust as the authority on nutrition and health? The answer is.... **A Registered Dietitian (RD)** (also known as Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)) and **Nutrition Scientist**.

Nutrition Scientists hold a Masters or PhD degree in nutrition and science from accredited colleges and universities which focus on nutrition research and education as opposed to clinical or patient focused care. They are well educated and trained and provide accurate and reliable nutrition information to the public.

What is an RD / RDN ? Simply put, RD / RDNs, or registered dietitians / registered dietitian nutritionists, are experts in nutrition and what the human body needs to be healthy. What sets a dietitian apart as an expert is the education and experience required prior to taking a registration exam. It should be noted that while dietitians are in actuality nutritionists; not all nutritionists are dietitians. To differentiate, look for the lettered credentials. If a name is not followed by the credentials RD, RDN, or LDN, you can not be certain of the individual's education and experience, and therefore the accuracy of the information they provide.

- Registered Dietitians are the clinically educated and trained nutrition experts. In many states, anybody can call himself or herself a nutritionist. This title requires no education or training.
- Registered Dietitians are experts in nutrition with college course requirements in the underlying scientific principles of nutrition, biochemistry, microbiology and physiology. The education process includes research training in the scientific method and evidence based nutrition information. RDs are educated and trained to translate scientific, nutrition principles into clinical and patient focused care.
- Registered Dietitians have been trained to perform medical nutrition therapy which includes patient assessment and development of nutrition care plans specific to varied nutrition-related diseases.
- What sets a Registered Dietitian apart as an expert and practitioner in nutrition is the education, experience and testing required prior to being credentialed. This includes:
 1. A minimum of an undergraduate degree (B.A. or B.S.) in Nutrition Science from an accredited college or university;
 2. Many RDs also hold higher degrees (Masters or PhDs) in Nutrition Science or related fields;
 3. Completion of a mandatory internship (typically 9 to 12 months) in which practical experience is obtained in a clinical setting at an accredited health care institution; After passage of a national comprehensive registration exam given by the Commission on Dietetic Registration; they are considered a credentialed professional, a Registered Dietitian (RD). In addition to the RD credential, most states have a licensure law which also provides a LD or LDN (licensed dietitian nutritionist) credential (the lettering varies by state).
 4. In order to maintain this credentialing there must be completion of regular

approved (by the Commission of Dietetic Registration) continuing education courses over the lifetime of practice in the field.

5. If a name is not followed by the credentials RD/RDN, you need to be aware of the individual's education and experience, as well as the accuracy of the information they provide.
6. **Beware** of other "nutritionists" who have **no** or **little** educational background or training in nutrition or science who advance themselves as experts in nutrition. Anyone can call themselves a nutritionist.

More on Registered Dietitian's Area of Practice

It is also important to note that dietitians specialize in different areas of dietetics. No one dietitian would consider themselves an expert in ALL areas of nutrition. Here are some of the areas in which a dietitian might specialize:

Foodservice	Cancer	Food Allergies
Pediatrics	Renal Disease	Research
Adolescents	Cardiac Disease	Public Health
Geriatrics	Transplants	Food Science
Weight management	Nutrition Support	Media
Preventative Health	Eating Disorders	Corporate Wellness
Diabetes	Sports Nutrition	Food Banks

Some dietitians work in hospitals as an "inpatient" or "clinical" dietitian, or as a foodservice director; others work in an outpatient setting. Outpatient dietitians may work in a hospital, clinic, long-term care facility, doctor's office, public health foundation, research facility, school/university, community center or in a private practice. This information should help you find the best professional to meet your and your children's needs. To find a Registered Dietitian in your area go to www.eatright.org and click on "find a nutrition professional".

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