



## REGISTERED DIETITIAN NUTRITIONIST VS. NUTRITIONIST IN CALIFORNIA

- **Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) are clinically educated, trained, and evidence-based nutrition experts in California.** Anybody in California can call himself or herself a nutritionist. This title requires no education or training. The title and scope of practice of the Registered Dietitian is protected by law.
- **Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are experts in nutrition with college course requirements in the fundamental scientific principles of nutrition, biochemistry, microbiology and physiology.** The education process includes research training in the scientific method to discern valid, evidence-based nutrition information versus speculation or opinion. RDNs are educated and trained to translate this evidence-based nutrition science for application in clinical, patient care settings, as well as in the community and public health arena, business/industry, food service, school, academia, and research.
- **Registered Dietitian Nutritionists have been trained to perform medical nutrition therapy (MNT).** MNT includes patient assessment and development of nutrition care plans specific to varied nutrition-related diseases, such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular, and renal diseases as well as gastro-intestinal disorders, food allergies, and many others.
- **What sets a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist apart as an expert and practitioner in nutrition are the academic and professional requirements.** These include:
  - Earning a minimum of an undergraduate degree (B.A. or B.S.) from an accredited college or university. Over 50% of RDNs also hold advanced degrees (Masters or PhDs) in food, nutrition, or related scientific fields.
  - Completing a mandatory accredited supervised practice program (i.e. internship) consisting of 1200 hours of professional experience in a health care facility, community agency, and/or a food service corporation.
  - Passing a national registration exam administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration. Only after passing this rigorous exam can the candidate be called a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.
  - Maintaining the credential through completion of approved continuing professional education, which must be submitted for verification of relevance and meeting requirements, over the lifetime of practice in the field.
  - Upholding the Code of Ethics established by the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics and the Commission on Dietetic Registration, which guides dietetic practice and contact.
- **Nutrition Scientists** with Masters or PhD degrees in nutrition and science from accredited colleges and universities focus on nutrition research and education as opposed to clinical or patient focused care provided by RDNs. These Nutrition Scientists are also well educated, trained, and can be a reliable and accurate source of nutrition information to the public.

*Beware of "nutritionists" who have no educational background or training in nutritional sciences who advance themselves as experts in nutrition. If a practitioner's name is not followed by the credentials "RD" or RDN, inquire as to their education and experience, as well as the accuracy of information they provide. Even other health professionals are not necessarily experts in nutritional sciences.*