

# Certified Nutritionist Career Information

A *certified nutritionist* will work with clients who desire to eat a healthier diet in order to lose weight or improve their overall health. The job of the nutritionist is to plan meals that can provide people with the proper nutrition based on their specific needs, such as diabetes or high cholesterol. As a nutritionist you can work in hospices, with patient's suffering from terminal illnesses, hospitals, private practices, nursing homes or you can run your own business.

## The Four Different Types of Nutritionist Specialties

As a nutritionist you can find accredited certificate programs through colleges, vocational schools and online universities that will allow you to obtain credentials in four different specialty areas.

The specialty areas for this profession include: community nutritionist, nutrition education, food and nutrition and sports nutrition.

A community nutritionist will work in health clinics, home health agencies and health maintenance organizations. This position requires the nutritionist to counsel adults, children and the elderly, individually or in large groups regarding food preparation and how to promote health and prevent disease. The community nutritionist will have a salary range of 42,000\$ to 44,000\$ a year.



The nutrition and education specialty programs are designed for professionals that have intentions of working in a gym, weight control clinic or health club. This type of program features coursework in anatomy, physiology, principles of food and nutrition therapy.

The nutrition and fitness certificate programs feature coursework that teaches the relationship between routine physical activity and good eating habits. Some of the coursework in this program will cover injury prevention and fitness activities.

Food and nutrition programs focus on the relationship of overall health in conjunction with a good diet. This program includes courses in how to develop nutritional plans and diet therapy.

A sports nutrition program will teach students the importance of how to blend nutrition and exercise knowledge and will cover topics in human metabolism and weight management.

These certificate programs are intended to further a nutritionist's knowledge in the aforementioned specialty areas and are offered at a college level. These programs vary in length and can take six to 12 months to complete. A salary for this field can be increased by four to six thousand annually with the additional training.

### **Education Requirements for the Nutritionist**

There is in-class and online programs available for the four year bachelor's or two year associate degree in Nutrition and Health Sciences. These programs offer courses in anatomy, nutrition, biology, administrative skills, physiology, community nutrition, food science, chemistry, nutrition science principles and ethical and leadership skills.

The certification requirements will vary from state to state and may require the nutritionist to obtain a state specific license or national registration through the American Dietetic Association, or ADA by taking and passing the ADA exam. Currently the majority of states will not require the nutritionist to become certified for this type of position, however, there are organizations that have been created, such as the ADA that have banded together to offer those that have obtained formal training in the dietary and nutrition field to be able to earn certification and have the nutritionist education programs regulated in order to ensure that all students enrolled in degree programs are provided with the upmost knowledge that can prepare them for a career as a nutritionist.



The license for this field will need to be renewed annually and will require the nutritionist to provide proof of fifteen hours of continued education. Hours can be earned online through the ADA or through each individual's state board for nutritionists. Courses offered include: weight management, prostate health, basic hygiene, surviving stress through the proper diet and cancer management.

### **Nutritionist Jobs and Internship Training**

With a degree in nutrition you can work as a personal trainer, weight loss consultant, weight management counselor, health educator, family nutritionist, home nutritionist consultant and clinical dietician.

During enrollment in a degree program you will work as an intern in a hospital, which will provide you with a better understanding of nutrition management. To qualify for

an internship the individual will need to be currently enrolled in an ADA approved program, complete clinical rotations in nutrition support for the elderly, provide letters of reference and submit an essay regarding your career objectives, client evaluation methods and goals.

Before a student can begin working as an intern they will need to provide proof of vaccinations, including documentation for tuberculosis testing within the past year.

The internship program allows the student to assist a certified nutritionist as they work with patients, discussing a patient's eating habits, healthier food options and personal goals.

According to the U.S. bureau of Labor Statistics, the average annual wage for the nutritionist is 54,000\$ as of 2011. The growth rate for the [certified nutritionist](#) is said to increase by 20% in the next eight years, which is faster than the average occupation growth.

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## Certified Clinical Nutritionist Programs

For those individuals that are interested in becoming a *certified clinical nutritionist* you will need to enroll in a four year bachelor's degree program that is accredited by the American Dietetic Association, through a university or college. These clinical nutritionist programs can also be found through online university programs.

## Clinical Nutritionist Course Requirements

In a bachelor's program you can have a major in human nutrition, nutritional science, dietetics or another science related field. Programs will be regulated by the ADA and the Nutrition Certification board, both of which will require the program to feature courses in physiology and anatomy, chemistry, microbiology, human biology, biochemistry and organic chemistry. The ADA also requires students to take additional classes in nutrition assessment, basic nutrition and natural supplementations. Courses in naturalistic medicine and herbal medicine may also be requirements, depending on the school.



Post graduate degrees are also available for individuals seeking certification in clinical nutrition. Doctors of osteopathy, medical doctors, optometrists, physical therapists, registered nurses, dentists, and physician assistants will qualify for this type of certification. As an alternative some graduates may choose to complete a doctorate or master's degree in human nutrition before they become certified as a nutritionist.

The certification board for this profession will require any potential applicants to have completed the post graduate program in clinical nutrition before being eligible for the certification exam. This type of program will feature courses in environment health issues, biochemistry, toxicity, medical conditions, lab assessments and other types of skills that are needed for clinical nutritionists. Individuals that have a doctorate or master's degree in human nutrition might be exempt from completing some of these courses.

### **Earning Your Nutritionist Certification Depending on the State**

The last step in earning your certification as a clinical nutritionist will be to take the exam that's offered by the clinical nutrition certification board. The exam will test

applicant's knowledge on topics covered in an accredited program. Those individuals that pass the certification will receive their credentials in this field.

Once they begin their career in this field the nutritionist will be responsible for obtaining 12 hours of continuing education every year in order to renew their license. In states that do not require licensure for the nutritionist the professional will need to earn their CE hours through the ADA. This can be done through the ADA website or other nutritionist regulating organizations. States that do require licensure for this field will feature state administered renewal exams, seminars and college level at home or online study courses. Depending on the state in which you reside, the amount of continuing education hours that are required yearly may vary and can range from 14 to 30 hours every one to two years.

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## Nutrition Degrees

The **nutrition degrees** available are the associate's bachelor's or the master's programs. Currently only thirty states mandate licensing for the nutritionist, giving those that reside in a state with no licensing requirements the option of taking the certification exam through the ADA. Here we will discuss the degree programs available and the different career opportunities for this field.

## Degree Program Information

A two year associate's degree in nutrition will prepare students for entry level positions as a nutritionist or the student can choose to transfer their credits into a bachelor's program. The associate program provides the basic skills needed to begin a career as a nutritionist. The four year bachelor's degree features courses that are designed to prepare a student for a more demanding career and can qualify the graduate for supervisory positions.



.coursework for nutrition degrees will include classes in foods, nutrition, chemistry, biology, physiology, biochemistry, and microbiology and institution management. The bachelor's degree program will offer additional courses such as computer science, psychology, sociology and advanced meal planning.

### **Employment Opportunities for the Nutritionist**

After graduating from a program there will be several different career paths to choose from, such as consultant dietician, management nutritionist, clinical nutritionist, lead facility nutritionist and kitchen manager.

The clinical nutritionist will be responsible for providing nutritional services to patients in assisted living facilities, hospitals or institutions. Working in this field will require the nutritionist to create and implement special types of meal programs and require them to evaluate program results on a monthly basis, making adjustments when needed.

Community nutritionists will provide counseling to individual clients or groups regarding proper eating habits and food alternatives. This type of counseling is intended to help prevent disease and promote a healthier lifestyle. As a community nutritionist you will work for health clinics, health maintenance organizations or health agencies.

Management nutritionists will be responsible for overseeing meal planning on a larger scale for hospitals, cafeterias, schools, prisons and health care facilities.

The consultant nutritionist is employed by private practices or health care facilities to perform nutrition screenings and counsel clients in order to improve their health.

The master's degree program is designed for graduates to become registered dietitians, also known as RD's. To become a **RD** a student will need to take courses in various types of exercise, food and counseling. Students will learn how to create balanced meal plans, create menus and direct individuals towards better food choices. To qualify for this type of degree program the student will need to have their bachelor's in nutrition from an **ADA** accredited program and will also need to have a background in science. Some schools may also require their applicants to have a college background in biology, chemistry, biochemistry or anatomy. The coursework included in a master's program will feature classes in nutritional health, metabolic diseases, minerals, exercise, biochemistry, vitamins, botanical medicine, advanced dietitian courses and health and hygiene.

A master's degree will qualify the RD to counsel groups of patients on different types of nutritional practices and can provide the following career opportunities: clinical dietitian, nutritional educator, community dietitian, project manager and management nutritionist.

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## Careers in Nutrition

*Careers in nutrition* can provide employment in a number of different environments and offer a high salary for several types of managerial positions such as master nutritional therapist, health care manager and nutrition therapy practitioner. As a nutritionist you can work in correctional facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, fitness centers and health clubs. Advancement opportunities in this field will depend on the nutritionist's level of education.

## Nutritionist Work Environment and Advancements

A nutritionist will treat clients that are suffering from heart disease, obesity, and diabetes and kidney failure and can manage the food service department of a clinical institution.

A community nutritionist will work in home health agencies, public health clinics and health maintenance organizations. The community nutritionist will educate people on healthier food alternatives, nutritional habits, how to shop and meal plan and how to prepare food for low sodium, low fat or low sugar diets.

There are currently careers in nutrition in marketing and advertising that has the nutritionist preparing literature for food distribution, dietary supplements and even



recipes.

Working in a large facility such as a jail, school or medical facility requires the nutritionist to not only meal plan but to also supervise the kitchen staff, working as a manager. In this type of position the nutritionist is also responsible for enforcing state sanitation regulations and health and safety requirements. The kitchen supervisor will also hire and train kitchen staff and manage the monthly food budget.

The consultant nutritionist will help clients with issues such as obesity, high cholesterol and diabetes. This is done by administering nutrition screenings that allow the nutritionist to analyze their client's needs. This type of nutritionist will work under contract for health care facilities or they will own their own practice.

As a master nutrition therapist you will have a large variety of positions to choose from such as health care manager, health foods grocer, health foods advisor and nutrition coordinator.

A nutritionist therapy practitioner will use their education to expand their practices as a health care professional by applying their expertise and can work by consulting

professionals such as herbalists, acupuncturists, personal chefs, fitness trainers, yoga instructors, massage therapists, chiropractors and pharmacists.

### **Nutritionist Education and Training Requirements**

To get a jump start on this career field you can take courses in high school for chemistry, health, biology, mathematics and diet and nutrition. To work as a nutritionist you will need to have an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree.

The degree programs will require the student to partake in an internship program at different types of medical facilities and institutions, in order to qualify for certification exams. The degree programs will typically require the student to obtain 900 hours of supervised practice under the supervision of a licensed nutritionist or dietitian. A student can choose to work as a full time intern for a six to twelve month period, or they can choose a part time internship which will take two years to complete.

Many states will not require a nutritionist to be licensed, in which case those that have obtained a degree in this field should take the ADA exam to earn credentials as a certified nutritionist. For states that do require a nutritionist to be licensed you will need to take state certification exams.

As a nutritionist you will have the option to specialize in different areas of the field such as renal dietetics, geriatric nutrition or diabetic diets. Some nutritionists will choose to work in sales for equipment, food manufacturers or pharmaceutical companies. Other nutritionists will focus on obtaining supervisory roles for positions such as department director, lead nutritionist, and associate director.

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## **Nutrition Certification**

Nutrition certification is accomplished through taking state licensing exams or exams that are administered through the American Dietetic Association. In order to qualify for nutrition certification exams you will first need to complete an [ADA](#) accredited

program or take a state licensing exam, should you reside in a state that requires a nutritionist to be certified.

## Nutritionist Program Options

An associate's degree program in nutrition will prepare a student for a career working with clients that need guidance and counseling regarding healthier food alternatives and a change in their eating habits. Associate's programs features courses in chemistry, basic nutrition, physiology, anatomy, documentation, microeconomics, food production and microbiology.

Popular career opportunities for the nutritionist with an associate's degree will include nutritionist educator, food service assistant, dietician assistant, food and health manager and WIC program instructor.



Once a program has been completed the graduate is eligible to take the nutritionist exam. To maintain certification as a nutritionist you'll need to enroll in online courses so that you can keep abreast with the changes of techniques used in the field and the different types of nutritional benefits found in certain changes in diet. These courses are referred to as continuing education classes, with each class typically counting as an hour's worth of credit. The nutritionist will need to earn a total of fifteen hours of CE to qualify for the yearly license renewal.

After earning an associate's degree some graduates will choose to acquire their bachelor's degree in food science or nutrition.

### **Continuing your Education as a Nutritionist**

Should you decide to enroll in a bachelor's degree program for nutrition, you will learn course material that offers a foundation in food science and nutrition as well as food service management. These programs can be coordinated with associate degree programs that will allow for a smooth transition into a bachelor's program. The coursework involved in this program are as follows: food science, accounting for management, health and wellness, advanced nutrition, food handling and safety regulations, nutrition and disease, metabolism, and nutrition for different life stages.

A master's degree in nutrition is also available and will offer coursework that can permit a student to design a program that fits their goals. These programs are offered online or in-class however, a master's program in nutrition can be hard to find locally. A master's degree program for the nutritionist is a two year program. Accelerated programs are available that can be completed in one year. To qualify for the master's program you will need to have obtained a bachelor's degree.

Coursework will include class topics such as energy proteins, health counseling techniques, eating disorders, diabetes and nutrition, cardiovascular nutrition, nutritional herbs, marketing nutrition, metabolizing carbs and metabolizing proteins.

For nutritionists that hold a master's degree, employment can be found as an HMO educator, nutrition teacher, Private nutritional counselor, nutritional journalist, or lead health consultant.

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## How to Become a Nutritionist

If you're interested in finding out **how to become a nutritionist**, the first step will be to learn about the education requirements for this profession. Commonly, the career of the nutritionist can be confused with that of the dietitian. While there are several states that may require the nutritionist to have certification, the majority do not have state licensing regulations for this field. Potential employers in this field will prefer to hire applicants that have completed a formal training program.

# Nutritionist Education Programs

Working as a nutritionist will require the individual to have extensive knowledge regarding how to plan healthy meals based on the weight loss goal of a client or a client's health issues.

Prior to enrolling in a program a student should check with their state regarding regulations and requirements for nutritionists.

A student will have the option of choosing from an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree program in Nutrition and Health Sciences. These programs will feature courses in chemistry, nutrition, business, psychology, leadership, economics, patient documentation and meal planning. These nutritionist programs will also offer students experience in a health care setting such as a hospital or clinic under supervision of a certified nutritionist. An internship is usually held in a hospital,



nursing home or hospice.

These different types of environments will provide the student with patients that have very diverse dietary needs and can prepare them with experience in specialty areas such as education and fitness, patient fitness and health, or working with the elderly population.

In states that do not require certification for the nutritionist, there are still programs available that are accredited by the ADA. The ADA is designed to oversee that all nutritionist programs feature course material that is beneficial for the profession.

This profession features courses that are heavy in science and requires the student to have adequate computer skills as the majority of patient documentation will be done on the computer.

After a student has completed a degree program they will need to take state licensing exams or take the ADA nutritionist exam to obtain their certification.

### **Where to Find Employment as a Nutritionist**

A nutritionist is required to renew their license each year and in order to do so they will be required to earn 15 hours of continuing education through the state or the ADA. This is typically done by taking online courses that focus on meal planning and coaching for patients that suffer from different types of medical conditions such as prostate cancer, breast cancer, high cholesterol or diabetes.

A nutritionist should taking continuing education courses that will best benefit their area of employment, such as health and fitness, pediatric nutrition or men's health.

You can find employment in this field through fitness centers, health clubs, hospitals or nursing homes. Some nutritionists will also start their own business as health consultants.

Working in a facility such as a nursing home or assisted living facility will require the nutritionist to plan monthly meals based on the health needs of the elderly population like bland low sodium low cholesterol meals.

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