

# Dietitians & Nutritionists

## FACTS FOR CONSUMERS



Commonwealth of Massachusetts • Office of Consumer Affairs • Division of Professional Licensure

### Board of Registration of Dietitians and Nutritionists

[www.mass.gov/dpl/boards/nu](http://www.mass.gov/dpl/boards/nu)

**H**uman Dietetics/Nutrition is the science concerned with the relationship between foods and human health. The focus is on nutrients in food, their actions/interactions and the balance of health, disease, socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological factors. This field requires the application of biochemistry, physiology, social sciences and physical sciences toward the achievement of optimal human health.

**T**he Board of Registration of Dietitians/Nutritionists grants licenses to qualified individuals who comply with the requirements of the statute. The Board monitors licensees to insure that the services provided are in accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws and Board rules and regulations. The Board also insures that licensees have complied with continuing professional education requirements necessary to maintain current knowledge and renew their license.

### About Dietitians/Nutritionists

**L**icensed Dietetic/Nutrition professionals are required to possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree with a major concentration in dietetics/nutrition, human nutrition, nutrition education or public health education.

Course work is heavily science-based including chemistry, biology and biochemistry, along with food and nutritional sciences. Licensees must also have completed related management and psychology courses. Once the requirements of graduation are met, completion of accredited pre-professional work experience is necessary. Licensees must also demonstrate successful completion of an approved comprehensive examination.

Requirements also mandate that licensed professionals follow a strict code of ethics and perform within the highest standards of the profession. Additionally, licensees are required to successfully maintain continuing professional education for license renewal.

While unlicensed nutritionists and dietetic practitioners are allowed to practice, there are advantages to seeing a licensed dietitian or nutritionist. These licensed professionals are required to meet educational standards and other licensing criteria. A client has the opportunity to file a complaint with the State Board if they think a licensee has violated the rules and regulations of the profession.

### Services Provided

Licensed Dietitians/Nutritionists may perform a wide variety of services for individuals, groups or institutions including but not limited to:

- ◆ Individualized nutritional assessment
- ◆ Individualized or group nutrition counseling for wellness, disease or life cycle changes
- ◆ Community outreach and education
- ◆ Foodservice management in areas such as school lunch programs, corporate/institutional programs, industry leadership
- ◆ College/university education
- ◆ Research for health and disease
- ◆ Product development

Typically, work settings include hospitals, nursing homes, health care clinics, doctor's offices, private practice, health clubs, community organizations, government/military institutions, school systems, colleges and universities, commercial food service, hospitality and management industries.

## Finding a Licensed Professional

Contact: **Board of Dietitians/Nutritionists**  
www.mass.gov/dpl  
Division of Professional Licensure  
239 Causeway Street  
Boston, MA 02114  
617-727-3073

**American Dietetic Association**  
www.eatright.org  
216 West Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60606-6995  
1-800-877-1600

**Massachusetts Dietetic Association**  
www.massnutrition.org  
92 Woodlands Dr.  
Falmouth, ME 04105  
617-501-7083

**Society for Nutrition Education**  
www.sne.org  
9202 N. Meridian, Suite 200  
Indianapolis, IN 46260  
1-800-235-6690

Your local hospital, physician or health care provider can also refer you to a licensed professional.

## Choosing a Licensed Dietitian/Nutritionist

Before choosing, determine what your needs are and determine the answers to the following questions:

- ◆ Is the individual currently licensed with the MA Board of Dietitians/Nutritionists?
- ◆ What professional organizations does the LDN belong to?
- ◆ Does the LDN have expertise in the area you need? For example: end stage renal disease, institutional management or micronutrient research.
- ◆ How much does the LDN charge?
- ◆ Is a referral needed from a physician and/or insurance company?

## What to Expect

For individual medical nutrition therapy the LDN may need to know your current and past medical history as well as your current and past medication history including any non-prescription medications/supplements. They may assess your current food/nutrient intake. They will obtain your height, weight, physical activity level, lifestyle and social circumstances. With you, the LDN will set reasonable goals individualized for your specific needs.

For non-therapeutic services the LDN may need to determine information such as: client population, budgetary allotment, research goals or community needs.

Be wary of persons who offer “amazing or immediate results,” who require you to purchase a product they sell or who provide treatment or items not based on tested, peer reviewed scientific principles.

## What is a Registered Dietitian (RD)?

Some LDNs may also have the credential of RD in addition to their Licensed Dietitian/Nutritionist status.

However, the credentials Registered Dietitian can only be used by Dietetic/Nutrition practitioners currently authorized for use by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). The letters RD signify the individual has completed the academic and experience requirements including a minimum of a bachelor’s degree granted by a U.S. regionally accredited college or university and an accredited pre-professional experience. RDs must demonstrate their knowledge by successfully completing the widely recognized and accepted national credentialing exam administered by the CDR. RDs also must maintain ongoing continuing professional development in accordance with CDR requirements. Typically, most health care institutions require RD status of their dietetic/nutrition professionals. Only those Licensed Dietitian/ Nutritionists who have met the requirements of the CDR may use the RD title.

## Filing a Complaint

While most licensees conduct themselves as true professionals, the Division of Professional Licensure will take action against those licensees who fail to maintain acceptable standards of competence and integrity.

If you have a serious complaint about a licensed Dietitian or Nutritionist, call or write the Division’s Office of Investigations and ask for a complaint form. The Office of Investigations is located at 239 Causeway Street, Boston, MA 02114. The phone number is (617) 727-7406. A copy of the complaint form can also be downloaded from the Division’s Web site ([www.mass.gov/dpl](http://www.mass.gov/dpl)).