

Dietitians and Chronic Disease Management

The impact of diet counselling



The facts about chronic disease

- Three out of five Canadians live with a chronic disease
- Chronic diseases represent the largest share of direct healthcare costs – an estimated \$68 billion annually
- **Obesity** – 62% of Canadian adults and 32% of children and youth (6-17 years) have excess weight or obesity
- **Diabetes** – More than one in four Canadians live with diabetes and this will rise to one in three by 2020
- **Heart Disease** – 1.3 million Canadians live with heart disease. As the leading cause of death and hospitalizations, heart disease is estimated to cost more than \$20 billion annually
- **High Blood Pressure** – Two in five Canadians have high blood pressure or are considered pre-hypertensive
- According to the World Health Organization, an unhealthy diet is one of the primary risk factors for chronic disease.

Current practice guidelines for treating obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and kidney disease specifically recommend the clinical expertise of a registered dietitian.

Dietitians are effective diet counsellors

- **Dietitians** have both the scientific knowledge and the counselling skills needed to deliver effective dietary advice
- **Dietitians** apply proven behaviour change techniques and counselling methods and tailor nutrition advice
- **Dietitians** counsel effectively to individuals and groups, optimize limited resources, and help streamline care.

Diet counselling makes a difference

- Structured and intensive lifestyle interventions delivered by dietitians can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by up to 60% in clients at risk
- Diet counselling improves general dietary behaviours associated with good health such as increased fruit, vegetable, and fibre intake and decreased fat intake
- After at least three months of dietary counselling, patients with chronic disease have experienced:
 - Decreased body weight of about 3-5 kg
 - Reduced glycated hemoglobin (A1C) levels – similar to the outcomes with two medications but with reduced cost and risk
 - Reduced blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Dietitians promote health through food and nutrition



Collaborative. Evidence-based

Evidenced Based Practice

Dietitians translate complex scientific evidence into practical solutions to promote health and manage special health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, allergies and obesity.

Collaborative approach

Dietitians are valuable members of the health care team, working collaboratively with other health care professionals including doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, and speech language pathologists.

Dietitians individualize information, care plans, and programs to meet the unique needs of clients and communities.

Regulated health professionals

Dietitians are regulated health professionals. The title 'dietitian' is protected by law, just like physician, nurse and pharmacist. Nutritionist is not a protected title – that means anyone can use it.*

You can identify a dietitian by the initials RD or PDt after their name. To use these titles, the dietitian must meet and maintain provincial registration requirements.

*except in Alberta, Quebec and Nova Scotia

**except in Quebec

Dietitians work in diverse roles and environments

Dietitians work in the community, health care, food services and private practice as:

Practitioners: specializing in working with individuals and groups to improve eating habits and address the nutritional needs of people with complex health problems to improve health outcomes

Policy Makers: advising government at all levels on population health strategies and regulatory measures

Leaders: in all aspects of food systems, including food security and sustainability, food service management, production and marketing

Knowledge Brokers: conducting research, answering questions and translating science into best practices

Educators: of health professionals, school teachers, fitness instructors and future dietetic professionals

University-educated

Dietitians are university educated with at least 1250 hours of supervised, hands-on training in food systems, disease management, population health, communications and counselling. They must pass a registration exam to become a regulated health professional.**

Ongoing professional development is not only a core value but a requirement.

