TAMC dietitians formulate healthy lifestyle strategies

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HONOLULU – When people hear the titles Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN) or dietitian, they often think of someone who will "tell me to eat healthy" or "help me lose weight." While both of these statements are indeed true, the job of a dietitian extends far beyond just promoting fruits and vegetables.

RDNs are experts in the field of food and nutrition. RDNs apply the scientific principles of food and nutrition into everyday solutions to help people make positive lifestyle changes. An initial encounter with a dietitian will focus on gathering a detailed picture of your health history, eating and exercise habits, food preferences and other lifestyle factors. This information will be used to create a customized plan to reach your health goals.

RDNs are found in a wide variety of food- and healthcare-related fields, including hospitals, community centers, schools, nursing homes, fitness centers, kitchens, research and private practice.

Defining Dietitian and Nutritionist

The main difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist lies in legal restrictions and insurance reimbursement eligibility. Laws vary by state, but in many states it is illegal to perform individualized nutrition counseling without a license. Additionally, nutrition counseling is not reimbursed through insurance unless performed by a licensed nutrition professional or dietitian.

Nutritionists have varying levels of training and experience in the field of food and nutrition, which means that almost anyone can call himself or herself a "nutritionist." The state of Hawaii does not recognize nutritionists as eligible practitioners for insurance reimbursement. An RDN is protected by law, and only those who have met the national standards for education and training may use this title.

At a minimum, RDNs must earn a four-year degree from an accredited dietetics program, complete at least 1,200 hours of a supervised internship and successfully pass a national registration exam. RDNs must also earn continuing education credits to maintain their registration. Over half of all RDNs hold a master's degree or higher, and many earn certifications in specialized fields such as diabetes education, sports nutrition, pediatrics or renal disease.

What are the benefits of seeing a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist?

In today's era of modern technology, a wealth of information can be obtained from the Internet. However, identifying reliable information can be tricky. RDNs abide by a code of ethics defined by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) and the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). This code states that dietitians are expected to provide clients with scientifically proven principles, current data, and interpret controversial information without personal bias. When you see a dietitian, you can be confident in knowing that you're receiving accurate and trustworthy advice.

TAMC Nutrition

Interested in improving your health and diet? Schedule an appointment with Tripler's Outpatient Nutrition clinic by calling (808) 433-4950.

TAMC TIP
Carb intake

Looking for healthier, less-refined carb choices? These carbohydrates are minimally processed foods that are digested more slowly than refined carbs, and contain vitamins, minerals and fiber. They do not typically cause rapid blood sugar spikes and should be the focus of your carbohydrate intake. Common examples include:

1. Whole grains (such as dense whole grain bread and intact whole grains, such as basmati rice, barley and quinoa)
2. Beans
3. Nuts
4. Vegetables and fruits

Add them to your grocery list and shopping cart for a healthier diet!