

Careers in Dietetics

Becoming a Dietetic Technician, Registered

Educational and professional requirements

Dietetic technicians, registered (DTRs), are trained in food and nutrition and are an integral part of the health-care and food service management teams. DTRs have met the following criteria to earn the DTR credential:

- **Completed a dietetic technician program** accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, that includes 450 hours of supervised practice experience in various community programs, health-care and foodservice facilities and has completed at least a two-year associate's degree at a U.S. regionally accredited college or university.

or

- **Completed an ACEND accredited didactic program** or coordinated program in dietetics and has completed at least a bachelor's degree at a U.S. regionally accredited college or university or foreign equivalent.
- **After completing the degree and dietetics coursework, passing a national examination** administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). For more information regarding the examination, refer to CDR's website at www.cdrnet.org. In order to maintain the credential, a DTR must complete continuing professional educational requirements.

College course work

The associate degree course work for dietetic technicians includes a variety of classes in food and nutrition sciences, foodservice systems management and a range of general science courses.

Employment opportunities

DTRs work independently as team members under the supervision of registered dietitians in a variety of employment settings, including health care, business and industry, community/public health, foodservice and research. Many work environments require that an individual be credentialed as a DTR.

DTRs work in:

- **Hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, retirement centers, hospices, home health-care programs and research facilities** conducting patient/client screens, gathering data and performing other tasks to assist the registered dietitian in providing medical nutrition therapy.
- **Schools, day-care centers, correctional facilities, restaurants, health-care facilities, corporations and hospitals**, managing employees, purchasing and food preparation and maintaining budgets within foodservice operations.
- **Women, Infants, Children (WIC) programs, public health agencies, Meals on Wheels and community health programs**, assisting registered dietitians with the implementation of programs and presentation of classes for the public.
- **Health clubs, weight management clinics and community wellness centers**, helping to educate clients about the connection between food, fitness and health.
- **Food companies, contract food management companies or food vending and distributing operations** developing menus and overseeing foodservice sanitation and food safety.

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Where to start if you already have a degree:

If you already completed college course work or have a degree that is not in dietetics and are interested in becoming a DTR, you should have your college transcript evaluated by the director of an ACEND accredited dietetic technician program or didactic program in dietetics. The program director will evaluate your previous academic preparation and identify the courses that you will need to complete before taking the registration exam for dietetic technicians.

Salaries and job outlook

According to the *2011 Compensation & Benefits Survey of the Dietetics Profession*, the median annual income of all DTRs in the U.S. who have been working in the field for four year or less was \$36,400. As with any profession, salaries and fees vary by region of the country, employment settings, scope of responsibility and supply of DTRs.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of dietitians and nutritionists is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2014 because of the increasing emphasis on disease prevention, a growing and aging population and public interest in nutrition. Employment in hospitals is expected to show little change because of anticipated slow growth and reduced lengths of hospital stay; however, faster growth is anticipated in nursing homes, residential care facilities and physician clinics. Dietetic Technicians are included in this summary.

Financial aid

There are many resources to help students pay for college. You may be able to obtain a grant or scholarship from a corporation, community or civic group, philanthropic or religious organization or directly from your chosen school or college you are interested in attending. Federal grants and low-interest loans may also be available.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation offers scholarships to encourage eligible students to enter the field of dietetics. Student members of the Academy enrolled in their first year of study in an ACEND accredited dietetic technician program may apply for a Foundation scholarship for use in the second year of study. Contact the Academy's Accreditation and Education Programs Team (800/877-1600, ext. 5400 or education@eatright.org) for scholarship information.

Need more information?

Go to www.eatright.org and click on "Become an RD/RDN/DTR" for more information. The site also lists the dietetics education programs accredited by ACEND at www.eatright.org/acend.

For other career guidance information, contact the Accreditation and Education Programs Team.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

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The **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics** is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.