

How To Engage Patients in Nutrition Counseling



- Step 1. Bring up the specific nutrition topic, e.g., overweight, elevated LDL-C or triglycerides, in a non-judgmental way.
- Step 2. Assess patient's current knowledge of the identified nutrition topic.
- Step 3. Ask if the patient is already making diet and lifestyle changes.
 - If so, support and encourage them!
 - Ask the patient to explain what changes he or she is working on.
 - If patient has not been making lifestyle changes, assess if they are in the contemplative phase.
- Step 4. Ask permission to discuss lifestyle changes with the patient, then share advice and correct misinformation.
 - Ask: "Would you like to hear what has worked for some of my other patients?"
 - After sharing advice, ask "What are your thoughts?"
 - At the end of the discussion, Ask: "Would you like a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) to help you personalize your nutrition therapy eating plan?"
- Step 5. Assist patient with goal setting and reinforce that seeing a RDN will promote successful lifestyle changes aimed at improving cardiovascular risk and also help improve quality of life.

Partnering With a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)

- Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) are:
 - Life style change facilitators skilled in motivational interviewing and behavior modification.
 - Food and nutrition experts who have completed at least a B.S. degree and a supervised internship, passed a national exam, and maintain continuing education requirements.
 - Bearers of the "RDN" credential, a legally protected title beyond that of a 'nutritionist'.
- How to Find and Partner with a RDN
 - Go to www.eatright.org, to find a RDN in your area by zip code, contact the outpatient nutrition department of your local healthcare system or check if patients' health care plan maintains a Provider list of RDNs.
 - Once located, have your staff contact the RDN to discuss availability, billing, and areas of expertise.
 - Prior to the visit, send a formal referral, along with a clinic note, and relevant lab data.
 - Ask the RDN to share patient goals and progress notes with you.

Update on Insurance Coverage for RDN Services

- Coverage of medical nutrition therapy (MNT) for those with diabetes (DM) or renal disease (CKD) is universal.
- Currently, Medicare Part B does not cover MNT for dyslipidemias without DM or CKD. Since 2011, Medicare has covered intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) for obesity if services are provided by PCPs, who may partner with a RDN. Medicaid coverage of MNT for dyslipidemia or obesity varies by state; check with your program.
- Commercial payer coverage of MNT for dyslipidemia provided by RDNs is good, and continues to expand as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and stakeholder efforts. In general, most large payers currently cover nutrition counseling for dyslipidemia.