



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 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, then share advice and correct misinformation.

- Ask: "Would you like to hear what has worked for some of my 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 lifestyle changes. The goals patients set should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based.

STEP 6.

Follow-up at every clinic visit to see if a patient achieved their goal(s) and provide help, if needed.

RDNs are:

- Lifestyle 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.
- Certified by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics to provide expert nutrition advice.

How to Find and Partner with a RDN

- Check www.eatright.org to find a RDN in your zip code area, contact the outpatient nutrition department of your local healthcare system, or check if the patient's healthcare plan has 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.
- Arrange a plan for monitoring and progress for the patient.

Insurance Coverage for RDN Services

- Coverage of medical nutrition therapy (MNT) for diabetes (DM) or renal disease (CKD) is universal.
- Currently, Medicare Part B does not cover MNT for dyslipidemias without DM or CKD. Medicare covers 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.
- Enrollment of RDNs as providers in Medicaid varies by state. Alternatively, RDNs can provide their services "incident to" a physician or other qualified health care providers (e.g., NP, PA).
- Commercial payer coverage of MNT for dyslipidemia provided by RDNs is good and continues to expand as a result of the Affordable Care Act. Most large payers cover nutrition counseling for dyslipidemia.
- Payment for MNT services by telehealth for dyslipidemia or obesity is available through Medicaid and commercial payers based on state laws/regulations and payer policies. MNT and IBT for Obesity are Medicare-approved telehealth services subject to federal laws and regulations. Eligibility and coverage parameters apply.