

# Consulting a Nutrition Expert

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR HEALTH



Good nutrition is a key building block for good health. Eating a balanced diet not only helps in maintaining a healthy weight, but also is critical in managing diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, and can help lower the risk for certain cancers. But what does “eating right” really mean? That is where consulting a nutrition expert can help.

In general, the term “nutritionist” does not reflect any particular training; therefore, ensure you are consulting a qualified professional and inquire about an individual’s training and number of years in practice. A **registered dietitian (RD)** has been certified by the American Dietetic Association (ADA). Registered dietitians have a bachelor’s degree in nutrition, must pass a thorough national exam and must maintain ongoing continuing education. A **certified nutrition specialist (CNS)** has an advanced degree in nutrition or a closely related science, has passed a rigorous written examination for certification and must also participate in extensive continuing nutrition education. Some professionals may have both CNS and RD designations.

Professionals with extensive training and experience will have the necessary critical thinking skills required to work with physicians. If you have a health condition, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or a digestive problem, a nutrition expert can consult with other members of your medical team and develop a nutrition plan that will help manage your condition—taking into account food or drug interactions, sufficient hydration and any other specific needs.

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—Libby Quigley, RD

A nutrition professional can also create a personalized nutrition program that fits a person’s lifestyle for any number of reasons, including a change of eating habits to lose or gain weight, to improve athletic performance or just to ensure a balanced, healthy diet.

“Good health starts with nutrition,” says Libby Quigley, RD, a registered dietitian who frequently works with the physicians at Eisenhower. “You cannot be healthy or physically fit if you are not eating right.” Quigley adds that a dietitian can teach clients how to read labels at the supermarket and help them discover simple, healthy recipes to cook at home. “We can also help you learn how to enjoy a healthy meal at your favorite restaurant and give you tips for eating well throughout the day. In short, a dietitian will develop an eating plan that works for you and the way you live.”

To find a registered dietitian in your area, go to the ADA’s Web site [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org). The American College of Nutrition’s Web site, [www.americacollegeofnutrition.org](http://www.americacollegeofnutrition.org), provides further information about CNS certification.