- Nutrition / Weight loss

5 reasons you need to see a dietitian

How a registered nutritionist dietitian can help you beyond weight loss

Manila Bulletin · 28 Jan 2026 · B-7 · CHESHIRE QUE, RND, RN, RD cheshireque@gmail.com

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word nutritionist or dietitian? Weight loss, right? While nutritionist dietitians can help you lose weight, they can help you with other health concerns that health coaches and quack nutritionists can never help you with, simply because they were not educated, trained, and licensed to manage medical conditions. In fact, they may do you more harm than good.

First, let us get some legal facts straight. All dietitians are nutritionists, but not all nutritionists are dietitians. A nutritionist may have obtained a college degree in nutrition, but if he or she didn't pass the licensure examination by the Board of Nutrition and Dietetics Professional Regulation Commission, then the individual has no legal right to be called a dietitian nor can he or she practice as a dietitian. A registered nutritionist dietitian (RND) is protected by a law, the Republic Act 10862 or the Nutrition and Dietetics Law of 2016. The Philippine law clearly states the scope of practice of an RND, focusing on nutrition care, diet planning, and the application of nutritional sciences.

Nutrition is the science of dealing with foods, their nutrient composition, eating habits, nutritional status, as well as health and diseases of individuals and populations. Dietetics is the science and art of applying the principles of nutrition to food planning and preparation, as well as regulating diets in relation to health and disease conditions. Therefore, integrating nutrition and dietetics constitutes a profession that is dynamic and focused on enhancing lives through food, science, and art.

Since we have established that RNDS are the only ones who should legally give diet and nutrition advice, especially to individuals with special needs and medical conditions, here are five reasons why you need to see a dietitian.

When you are unable to eat due to a medical condition

Oral surgeries, dental issues, anemia, cancer treatment, and depression are some reasons why a person cannot eat or lose their appetite. Being unable to get adequate nutrition will weaken your immune system, cause nutrient deficiencies, and further make you sick. It will cause complications and could even be fatal. RNDS are trained to modify diets that could help nourish a person. That includes doing mechanical modifications for individuals who cannot chew, have difficulty swallowing, have lost the sense of smell or taste, and the like. After all, we do not just eat for pleasure. We eat primarily to get nourished. Dietitians can ensure that we get the right amount of nutrients that the body requires.

When you have digestive issues

RNDS can help repair your gut, especially when you have hyperacidity, GERD or gastroesophageal reflux, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, bloating, indigestion, and even hemorrhoids. It is not just about adding more fiber to your diet. RNDS would know what other plant nutrients you need to establish balance in your gut microbiome and digestive enzymes. Moreover, if you had any surgical procedures done on your digestive system, like a gastric bypass, or have a colostomy or ileostomy bag in

place, RNDS can help you prevent undesirable effects like smelly discharge and nutrient deficiencies caused by the surgical procedure. Dietitians practicing

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integrative and functional nutrition are especially trained in managing leaky gut syndrome, which helps decrease chronic inflammation related to a compromised immune system, food intolerances or sensitivities, skin issues, mood disorders, and more.

When you have eating disorders

RNDS are educated and trained on managing individuals with mental health disorders like schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and more. The brain needs optimum nutrition to help balance the production of brain chemicals or neurotransmitters. Only dietitians are knowledgeable in computing requirements after careful assessment and executing them in terms of actual meal plans. The gut-brain axis is part and parcel of mental health nutrition. There are food triggers that affect the mood. There are drug nutrient interactions that can never be addressed by Google, AI, or coaches that have no knowledge about clinical assessment and targeted diet prescriptions that will meet individual nutrition requirements.

When you are expecting

When a woman is pregnant, she does eat for two individuals, but that doesn't mean she should consume double the amount. Otherwise, she would have complications in her pregnancy. An RND can help a pregnant woman know how much and what she should eat to ensure the growth and development of the fetus and prevent her from gaining excessive weight. This could increase her risk of developing gestational diabetes. An RND can help choose food that will help manage blood pressure to prevent pre-eclampsia. The RND can also help pregnant women experiencing morning sickness or hyperemesis gravidarium find nourishment throughout the day to prevent weight loss, dehydration, and nutrient deficiencies.

When you need optimum performance as an athlete

Fitness and sports coaches are not nutritionist dietitians. They are experts on physical fitness and sports. Therefore, if you are an athlete, whether professional or recreational, only consult a registered nutritionist dietitian for optimum athletic performance. RNDS can give you the right amount of macronutrients, fluids, electrolytes that are needed in every phase of training and competition. Requirements for carbohydrates, protein, fat, and fluids differ pre-competition, during training, competition, and the recovery phase. RNDS can also recommend functional food that are wholesome and modified, as well as targeted supplementation as needed that will not damage your body organs like the kidneys and liver, but ensure that phytonutrients, antioxidants, and fiber are adequate to help reduce inflammatory responses after training. The Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Republic Act 10862 clearly indicated that RNDS can recommend specialized nutrition therapies, including supplementation with medical foods, and provide quality food and nutrition products, programs, and services that are aimed at optimizing the health and wellbeing of individuals.

With so many quack nutritionists and wannabes lurking around and preying on innocent individuals who simply wish to be healthy, it is important that we protect ourselves and ensure that we are only guided by licensed professionals. When it comes to your health, don't take chances. Let a professional take care of you!