

## What is a Registered Dietitian (RD)?

Registered dietitians are food and nutrition experts who work in a wide variety of employment settings, including health care, business and industry, public health, education, research, and private practice.

RDs may work in:

- *Hospitals, HMOs or other health care facilities*, educating patients about nutrition and administering medical nutrition therapy as part of the health care team. They may also manage the foodservice operations in these settings, as well as in schools, day-care centers, and correctional facilities, overseeing everything from food purchasing and preparation to managing staff.
- *Sports nutrition and corporate wellness programs*, educating clients about the connection between food, fitness, and health.
- *Food and nutrition-related businesses and industries*, working in communications, consumer affairs, public relations, marketing, or product development.
- *Private practice*, working under contract with health care or food companies, or in their own business. RDs may provide services to foodservice or restaurant managers, food vendors, and distributors, or athletes, nursing home residents, or company employees.
- *Community and public health settings* teaching monitoring, and advising the public, and helping to improve their quality of life through healthy eating habits
- *Universities and medical centers*, teaching physicians, nurses, dietetics students, and others the sophisticated science of foods and nutrition
- *Research areas* in food and pharmaceutical companies, universities, and hospitals, directing or conducting experiments to answer critical nutrition questions and find alternative foods or nutrition recommendations for the public

## Salaries and Job Outlook

According to American Dietetic Association's (ADA) 2005 Dietetics Compensation and Benefits Survey, half of all RDs in the U.S. who have been working full-time in the field for five years or less earn between \$35,000 and \$46,000 per year. As with any profession, salaries and fees vary by region of the country, employment settings, scope of responsibility, and supply of RDs. Salaries increase with years of experience and many RDs, particularly those in management, business, and consulting earn incomes above \$72,000.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of dietitians is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2014 because of increased 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 patients' lengths of hospital stay. Faster growth, however, is anticipated in nursing homes, residential care facilities, and physician clinics.

Source: *American Dietetic Association: Registered Dietitian Fact Sheet*  
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