

How to Schedule an Appointment with a Registered Dietitian

Meeting with a dietitian can help your son/daughter meet his or her nutrition goals and get the best nutrition care. This handout will explain how you can schedule an appointment with a Registered Dietitian, how to find a dietitian and what will happen at the first appointment. It will also explain how you can work with the dietitian to make sure your son/daughter receives the best care for his or her needs.

HOW DO I FIND A REGISTERED DIETITIAN?

There are a few ways you can schedule an appointment with a **Registered Dietitian**. Here are a few tips:

- **Talk with your son/daughter's primary care doctor.** Many doctors know dietitians in their offices or your local community. When your son/daughter sees a dietitian who works with his or her doctor, they can both make sure your son/daughter receives the best care for his or her needs.
- **Ask your friends to recommend a dietitian.** Many people see dietitians for different reasons. Ask your friends if they know a dietitian who has helped them improve their health.
- **Find a dietitian on the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics's website.** Go to www.eatright.org. Then, click on the "Find a Registered Dietitian" button in the top right corner. From there, you can search for a dietitian by zip code or specialty.

HOW DO I SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A DIETITIAN?

You can schedule an appointment with a dietitian by **calling your son/daughter's primary care doctor**. Ask the doctor to send a referral to the dietitian.

You should also call the dietitian's office to make sure he or she has received the referral. Ask if the dietitian needs any other documents to schedule the appointment.

WILL MY HEALTH INSURANCE COVER THE APPOINTMENT?

It is best to call your insurance company to check for your level of coverage. When you call your insurance, ask about the Medical Nutrition Therapy benefit.

If you have a private health insurance company, it should have good coverage for many nutrition concerns. These concerns include weight gain, weight loss, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, food allergies or tube feeding.

If you have Medicaid, coverage varies by state.

If you have Medicare, it will cover only diabetes, chronic renal insufficiency, end-stage renal disease or post-kidney transplant.

Did you know?

A dietitian is different from a nutritionist. You should schedule an appointment with a **Registered Dietitian**. A Registered Dietitian is a true expert who will make sure your son/daughter receives the best medical and nutrition advice.

A Registered Dietitian has the letters **RD** or **RDN** after his or her name. These letters mean the person has a college degree in nutrition and has passed a national nutrition test. It also means this person has worked with patients who have different nutrition and medical needs.

A **nutritionist** *does not* have the same training or education as a Registered Dietitian. A nutritionist often *does not* have RD or RDN after his or her name.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE FIRST APPOINTMENT?

At the first appointment, the dietitian will ask questions about your son/daughter. The dietitian will also ask about your son/daughter's eating habits and nutrition goals.

Then, the dietitian will help you and your son/daughter make a nutrition plan. The plan will include your son/daughter's food likes and dislikes, lifestyle and health. The dietitian will also help your son/daughter choose a few smaller goals to work on during the week after the first appointment.

Before the appointment ends, the dietitian will talk with you and your son/daughter about follow-up appointments. Many people who see a dietitian regularly do better with their nutrition goals.

ARE THERE DIETITIANS WHO SPECIALIZE IN NUTRITION FOR DOWN SYNDROME?

Yes, but a dietitian does not need to specialize in nutrition for Down syndrome. This is because nutrition for children with Down syndrome is similar to nutrition for children without Down syndrome.

Many dietitians who specialize in nutrition for Down syndrome work in Down syndrome programs. They see patients as part of a medical team like your son/daughter's team at MassGeneral Hospital for Children.

If you'd like to see a dietitian who specializes in nutrition for Down syndrome...

We recommend Joan Medlen, MEd, RD, LDN. She is based in Oregon, but she can provide nutrition services at a distance that you pay for out-of-pocket. This means your insurance *might not cover* the distance nutrition services.

Learn more about Joan's distance nutrition services at www.downsyndromenutrition.com/services/distance.

HOW CAN I WORK WITH THE DIETITIAN SO THAT MY SON/DAUGHTER RECEIVES THE BEST NUTRITION CARE?

Working with the dietitian is a good way to help your son/daughter receive the best nutrition care. Here are a few tips on how you can work with the dietitian:

- **Provide the dietitian with information about your son/daughter's health.** This will help the dietitian learn more about your son/daughter's needs.
- **Tell the dietitian if your son/daughter has any medical conditions that are more common in children with Down syndrome.** These can include hypothyroidism, celiac disease or sleep apnea.
- **Offer the dietitian a chance to ask questions about how he or she can best care for your son/daughter.** You can ask the dietitian, "Are there any questions about my son/daughter that I can answer so you can better care for him/her?"
- **Share your son/daughter's strengths and learning style.** This way, the dietitian can give care in the way you son/daughter likes or learns best. You can say, "I like your colorful handout. My son/daughter learns best with handouts."
- **If your son/daughter sees a dietitian through a Down syndrome program,** ask the dietitian if it's okay to share his or her contact information with the dietitian who is closer to home, in case he or she has questions. This will ensure that your dietitian closer to home can reach out to the dietitian in MGHfC's Down Syndrome Program.

Did you know?

The nutrition needs for children with and without Down syndrome are similar. The main difference is that children with Down syndrome have a slightly lower *basal metabolic rate*. This means they digest food a bit slower than children without Down syndrome.

You can tell the dietitian, "My son/daughter's basal metabolic rate is 10% slower than that of a child without Down syndrome." This will help the dietitian give your son/daughter the best care for his or her needs.

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Down Syndrome Program

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www.massgeneral.org/downsyndrome

For more information please call

617-643-8912