



Medical Nutrition Therapy CPT Codes and Service Description

The American Dietetic Association (ADA) is pleased to announce three new current procedural terminology codes (CPT) for medical nutrition therapy (MNT). The codes have been released by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) and are included in *American Medical Association's (AMA) Current Procedural Terminology CPT 2001* book. As of January 1, 2001 the MNT CPT codes are available and have been defined by the ADA, AMA and HCFA as:

97802	Medical nutrition therapy* ; initial assessment and intervention, individual, face-to-face with the patient, each 15 minutes
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97803	re-assessment and intervention, individual, face-to-face with the patient, each 15 minutes
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97804	group (2 or more individual(s)), each 30 minutes
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(For medical nutrition therapy assessment and/or intervention performed by a physician, see Evaluation and Management or Preventive Medicine service codes.) CPT codes, descriptions and material only are copyright ©2000 American Medical Association. All Rights Reserved.

*Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) begins with the nutritional assessment of a client, followed by a medically prescribed nutrition therapy based on nutrition practice guidelines or protocols. MNT includes identifying treatment goals and developing the nutrition prescription, individualized self-management training and goal-setting, and then providing specialized nutrition therapies to treat the specific illness or condition.

- The Registered Dietitian (RD) is a specialized practitioner with academic and professional training in nutrition and credentialed through the national credentialing agency, the Commission on Dietetic Registration. RDs provide clients with a comprehensive service that includes an assessment of the nutrition status of a client with a condition, illness, or injury that puts him or her at nutritional risk.
- Nutrition Assessment includes review and analysis of medical and dietary history, laboratory test values, anthropometric measurements, and food and prescription drug interactions.
- Nutrition Interventions most appropriate for management or treatment of the client's condition are chosen after careful review of available data.

As an integral part of the health care team, the Registered Dietitian receives referrals from the Primary Care Physician when that physician writes a prescription for MNT. Upon completion of the nutrition therapy, outcomes are reported to the referring physician. For more information about education and professional requirements for RDs, visit the ADA's Knowledge Center <http://www.eatright.org/becomeanrd.html>.



Medical Nutrition Therapy Providing Return on Investment

Research demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of medical nutrition therapy.

- **Oxford Health Plan¹** saved **\$10 for every \$1 spent** on nutrition counseling for at risk elderly patients. Monthly costs for Medicare claims alone tumbled from \$66,000 before the nutrition program to \$45,000 afterwards. As a result, the health plan continued use of nutrition screenings.
- **The Lewin Group²** documented an **8.6% reduction** in hospital utilization and **16.9% reduction** in physician visits associated with Medical Nutrition Therapy for patients with cardiovascular disease.
- **The Lewin Group²** additionally documented a **9.5% reduction** in hospital utilization and **23.5% reduction** in physician visits when Medical Nutrition Therapy was provided to persons with diabetes mellitus.
- **The University of California Irvine³** demonstrated lipid drug eligibility was obviated in **34 of 67** subjects, the estimated annual cost savings from the avoidance of lipid medication was **\$60,652**.
- **Pfizer Corporation⁴** projected **\$728,772 in annual savings** from reduced cardiac claims of their employees from an on-site nutrition/exercise intervention program.
- **U.S. Department of Defense⁵** saved **3.1 million dollars** in the first year of a nutrition therapy program utilizing Registered Dietitians counseling 636,222 patients with cardiovascular disease, diabetes and renal disease.

¹ Oxford Health Plan's pilot nutrition screening program applied to Medicare population in New York, between 1991-1993.

² Johnson, Rachel. The Lewin Group – What does it tell us, and why does it matter? J Am Diet Assoc. 1999, 99:426-427.

³ Sikland, G et al. Medical Nutrition Therapy lowers serum cholesterol and saves medication costs in Medicare populations with hypercholesterolemia. J AM Diet Assoc. 1998, 98:889-894.

⁴ Pfizer Corp., Lipid Intervention Program, <http://healthproject.stanford.edu/koop/pfizer99/documentation.html>. Accessed 2/16/01.

⁵ The Cost of Covering Medical Nutrition Therapy Services under TRICARE: Benefits Costs, Cost Avoidance and Savings. Final report prepared by the Lewin Group, Inc. for the Department of Defense Health Affairs, 11/15/98.



Registered Dietitian

Who is a registered dietitian?

A registered dietitian is a food and nutrition expert who has met the minimum academic and professional requirements to qualify for the credential "RD." In addition to RD credentialing, many states have regulatory laws for dietitians and nutrition practitioners. Frequently these state requirements are met through the same education and training required to become an RD.

What are the educational and professional requirements for a registered dietitian?

Registered dietitians must meet the following criteria to earn the RD credential:

- Complete a minimum of a bachelor's degree at a US regionally accredited university or college and course work approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) of the American Dietetic Association.
- Complete a CADE-accredited or approved, supervised practice program at a healthcare facility, community agency, or a foodservice corporation, or combined with undergraduate or graduate studies. Typically, a practice program will run six to twelve months in length.
- Pass a national examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR).
- Complete continuing professional educational requirements to maintain registration.

Some RDs hold additional certifications in specialized areas of practice, such as pediatric or renal nutrition, nutrition support, and diabetes education. These certifications are awarded through CDR, the credentialing agency for ADA, and / or other medical and nutrition organizations and are recognized within the profession, but are not required.

What kind of coursework might a registered dietitian study in college?

Registered dietitians study a variety of subjects, ranging from food and nutrition sciences, foodservice systems management, business, economics, computer science, culinary arts, sociology, and communications to science courses such as biochemistry, physiology, microbiology, anatomy, and chemistry.

Employment settings

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of registered dietitians is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2005 because of increased emphasis on disease prevention, a growing and aging population, and public interest in nutrition. The majority of registered dietitians work in the treatment and prevention of disease (administering medical nutrition therapy, as part of medical teams), often in hospitals, HMOs, private practice or other health care facilities. In addition, a large number of dietitians work in community and public health settings and academia and research. A growing number of registered dietitians work with food and nutrition industry and business, journalism, sports nutrition, corporate wellness programs and other non-traditional work settings. ADA's research survey shows that registered dietitians work in the following:

Hospitals (inpatient/acute care)	34.6%
Clinics or ambulatory care centers	10.5%
Extended care facilities	10.9%
HMOs, physician, or other care providers	2.0%
Home care	1.4%
Private practice, primarily to individual clients	3.4%
Consultation, primarily to health-care facilities	6.7%
Community/public health programs	11.2%
College or university faculty/research	5.4%
School foodservice (K-12)	3.2%
Consultation, primarily to other organizations	2.0%
Other, for-profit organizations/industries	4.5%
Other, non-profit organizations	4.3%

American Dietetic Association study 1997.

How can I locate a registered dietitian near me?

Call ADA's Consumer Nutrition Hot Line at 800/366-1655, weekdays between 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. (CST)

For media information contact ADA's Public Relations Team at 800/877-1600, ext 4822.

With nearly 70,000 members, the American Dietetic Association is the nation's largest organization of nutrition and food professionals. ADA promotes optimal nutrition and well-being for all people by advocating for its members. ADA members are the leading source of food and nutrition services. ADA has become a powerful source in focusing the attention of government, the media and, above all, the American public on the role of nutrition.



Medical Nutrition Therapy References

Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) provided by a registered dietitian results in positive patient outcomes and is a cost-effective service to health care organizations, employers and other third party payers. This list includes a selection of references that describe the cost-effectiveness and cost-savings of MNT services.

Cardiovascular

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Diabetes

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Other

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