

Dietitian

■ Job Description

As a *food services administrator*, a registered dietitian hires, trains, and supervises food service employees; writes purchase specifications for food and equipment; develops and monitors food, equipment, and personnel budgets; plans menus; and is responsible for the quality control of food production. As a *clinical dietitian*, the dietitian is a member of the health care team. The clinical dietitian assesses and monitors patients' nutritional status and makes recommendations for nutrition intake; instructs individuals about food selection and preparation when at home; and teaches principles of good nutrition. Dietitians also become involved in research, the education of health science students, and nutrition education of the general public.

■ Job Settings

Hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, industry, public health organizations, and private practice

■ Projected Need

Nationally and in Illinois, employment of dietitians is expected to grow at an average rate through 2010. Contributing to the demand for dietitians will be the increased need for nutritional analysis by the growing and aging population, as well as a heightened awareness of healthier living by the public.

The number of jobs for dietitians in hospitals is expected to grow slowly. Fewer patients are spending the night in hospitals so there is less demand for food. In addition, many hospitals contract out their food service so they do not need dietitians on staff. Employment may also be limited because other workers may substitute for nutritionists. For example, nurses, health educators, and dietetic technicians all could fill in for dietitians.

In Illinois there were about 2,220 dietitians and nutritionists employed in this small occupation in 2000.

■ Salaries

Nationally, the median wage for dietitians is \$19.43 per hour. In Illinois, the median hourly wage is \$17.59. Wages vary by years of practice and educational level of the dietitian. The area of the country and the size of the community also affect wages.

Wages also vary by the area in which dietitians practice. The median wages for some areas are given below.

Area of Practice	Median Monthly Wage	Median Hourly Wage
Clinical	\$3,130	\$18.05
Community	\$3,165	\$18.25
Consultation	\$4,065	\$23.45
Education and research	\$3,920	\$22.61
Food and nutrition management	\$4,030	\$23.25

According to the American Dietetic Association, half of all registered dietitians in the U.S. with up to four years of experience earned between \$33,000 and \$42,000 per year in 2002. Many registered dietitians, particularly those in management, business, and consulting earn incomes above \$50,000 a year.

■ Related Careers

The science courses required for dietetics are related to coursework in health education, nursing, pharmacy, medical technology, and occupational and physical therapies.

■ Differences in Training

A student may become a registered dietitian in one of two ways. The first option is to complete a bachelor's level CADE-accredited coordinated program that combines classroom work with 900 hours of supervised internship experience. Currently there are 51 programs of this type. Competition for internships is strong. A second option is to complete a bachelor's degree from a CADE-accredited program that provides only classroom instruction. After receiving your degree you then need to get 900 hours of hands-on experience through a CADE-accredited practice program or internship. Currently there are 264 accredited internship programs. They may take up to a year to complete on a full-time basis or up to two years on a part-time basis.

■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/login.asp>

[Dietetics](#)
[Food Service Systems Management](#)

■ Credentials

Twenty-seven states require that dietitians be licensed. Requirements for the license vary by state. In Illinois, dietitians must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. Licensing requirements include: completion of a bachelor's degree program in human nutrition, foods and nutrition, dietetics, food systems management, or nutrition education; completion of 900 hours of supervised experience with an approved supervisor; or current registration with the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR); and successful completion of an exam.

Licensure must be renewed every two years and requires 30 hours of continuing education.

Fourteen states require that dietitians be certified or registered. The Commission on Dietetic Registration awards the Registered Dietitian (RD) credential. The requirements for the RD are similar to the requirements listed above. For dietitians who live in states where a license or certificate is not required, the RD is still recommended. Registration is a sign of the dietitian's skills and knowledge. For more information about the RD credential contact the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

■ Advanced Training

The master's degree or a doctorate is preparatory to conducting research, teaching in health and educational institutions, or performing supervisory work in industry. An advanced degree in public health nutrition or in community nutrition is advisable for work as a consultant or educator in public health or community agencies.

■ Resources

American Dietetic Association
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60606-6995
Phone: 800.877.1600
E-mail: education@eatright.org
<http://www.eatright.org>

Click on "Careers and Students."

Each year the American Dietetic Association Foundation awards undergraduate and graduate scholarships to student members of the association. The number of scholarships available and the dollar amount vary from year-to-year. For the 2003-2004 academic year, 144 scholarships were awarded in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$4,500.

Commission on Dietetic Registration
American Dietetic Association
120 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60606-6995
Phone: 312.899.0040
E-mail: cdr@eatright.org
<http://www.cdrnet.org>