

# Careers in Dietetics

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## Becoming a Dietetic Technician, Registered

### Educational and professional requirements

Dietetic technicians, registered (DTRs), are trained in food and nutrition and are an integral part of the health-care and foodservice management teams. DTRs have met the following criteria to earn the DTR credential:

- **Completed a dietetic technician program** by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE) of the American Dietetic Association (ADA), that includes 450 hours of supervised practice experience in various community programs, health-care and foodservice facilities and has completed at least a two year associate's degree at a U.S. regionally accredited college or university.

or

- **Completed coursework in a CADE-accredited didactic program** or coordinated program in dietetics and has completed at least a bachelor's degree at a U.S. regionally accredited college or university
- **After completing the degree and dietetics coursework, pass a national examination** administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). For more information regarding the examination, refer to CDR's Website at [www.cdnet.org](http://www.cdnet.org).
- **Completed continuing professional educational requirements** to maintain registration.

### College course work

The course work for dietetic technicians includes a variety of classes in food and nutrition sciences, foodservice systems management and a range of general science courses.

### Employment opportunities

DTRs work independently or as a team member under the supervision of registered dietitians in a variety of employment settings, including health care, business and industry, community/public health, foodservice and research. Many work environments require that an individual be credentialed as a DTR.

#### DTRs work in:

- **Hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, retirement centers, hospices, home health-care programs and research facilities** conducting screens, gathering data and performing other tasks to assist the registered dietitian in providing medical nutrition therapy.
- **Schools, day-care centers, correctional facilities, restaurants, health-care facilities, corporations and hospitals**, managing employees, purchasing and food preparation and maintaining budgets within foodservice operations.
- **Women, Infants, Children (WIC) programs, public health agencies, Meals on Wheels and community health programs**, developing and teaching nutrition classes for the public.
- **Health clubs, weight management clinics and community wellness centers**, helping to educate clients about the connection between food, fitness and health.
- **Food companies, contract food management companies or food vending and distributing operations** developing menus, overseeing foodservice sanitation and food safety.

## If you already have a degree:

If you already completed college course work or have a degree that is not in dietetics and are interested in becoming a DTR, you should have your college transcript evaluated by the director of a CADE-accredited dietetic technician program. The CADE program director will evaluate your previous academic preparation and identify the courses you need to complete before taking the registration exam for dietetic technicians.

## Salaries and job outlook

According to ADA's *Compensation & Benefits Survey of the Dietetics Profession 2009*, half of all DTRs in the U.S. who have been working in the field full-time for four years or less earn between \$30,800 and \$43,100 per year. Salary levels vary with region, employment setting, geographical location, scope of responsibility and supply of DTRs.

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

## Financial aid

There are many resources to help students pay for college. You may be able to obtain a grant or scholarship from a corporation, community or civic group, philanthropic or religious organization or directly from the chosen school or college you are interested in attending. Federal grants and low-interest loans may also be available. The ADA Foundation (ADAF) offers scholarships to encourage eligible students to enter the field of dietetics. Student members of ADA enrolled in the first year of study in a CADE-accredited dietetic technician program may apply for an ADAF scholarship for use in the second year of study. Contact ADA's Accreditation and Education Programs Team (800/877-1600, ext. 5400 or [education@eatright.org](mailto:education@eatright.org)) for ADAF scholarship information.

## Need more information?

Go to [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and click on "For Students" for more information. The site also lists the dietetics education programs accredited or approved by CADE at [www.eatright.org/cade](http://www.eatright.org/cade).

For other career guidance information, contact ADA's Accreditation and Education Programs Team.

## American Dietetic Association

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The **American Dietetic Association** is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

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