



# Criteria to Consult a Dietitian

---

It can be difficult to know when exactly you should consult a Registered Dietitian, but if you are in doubt, send a consult. Below though is a list of criteria when a Registered Dietitian needs to be consulted.

## Criteria to Consult

---

A consult to a Dietitian should always be sent in the following scenarios:

- Stage I, II, III, IV wounds. New or recurring.
- Unintentional weight loss.
- Cachectic appearance (muscle wasting, loss of subcutaneous fat).
- Nausea/vomiting that has not resolved within 24 hours.
- NPO or clear fluid diet (prior to initiation).
- Poor intake (less than 50%) for >3 days.
- Any noted chewing or swallowing difficulty at any meal.
- Artificial nutrition/Tube feed.
- Total parenteral nutrition.
- Nutrition education or counselling needed for patient or family.
- Diarrhea persistent or occurrence over 2-3 days.
- Constipation that is either not resolved, or only resolved with medications.
- Delayed or impaired wound healing.
- End of life diagnosis.
- Palliative care diagnosis.
- Suspected dehydration or insufficient fluid intake perceived.
- Diet texture or fluid viscosity change requested or needed.
- Hospital admission, care plan needs updating.
- Dental changes (new dentures, tooth infection, tooth extraction, refusing dentures).
- Fluid restriction recommendation.

## When Consults are Not Needed

---

A consult to a Dietitian is not always necessary. Here are current criteria in long term care where it is recommended that you can either send a note to inform the Dietitian of something or a question, rather than a full consult.

The difference is a full consult requires a full nutrition assessment by a Dietitian, when in reality, this may not be necessary. A note or question instead keeps the Dietitian apprised of the situation, leaving the nutrition assessment to their discretion if it is necessary or not.

- Low albumin (Not evidence supported in elderly).
- Food preference changes (Send a note to Dietary).
- Food service complaints (Send a note to Dietary).
- Repeated consults within less than 1 week (Refer to Dietitian's previous consult notes to see their follow up plan).
- Elevated weight (Dietitian's track this monthly, please refer to their care plan note).
- Skin tears.
- Obese BMI (Dietitian tracks these monthly, please refer to their care plan note).

While some of these scenarios may need the attention of the Dietitian, many are likely already in a resident's care plan and they are likely already managing it. If you have a question for the Dietitian, it is best to send a note or your facility method of communication first.

## The Value of Dietitian's

---

Research shows that when a Dietitian is in a facility that protein and energy intake was increased! When a Dietitian is able to assess a residents nutrition status other healthcare team interventions are more likely to succeed.

A Dietitian has extensive education (a minimum of 6 years currently with a Master's Degree) to understand nutrition and how it can help a resident living in long term care have optimal nutrition status. A Dietitian can help relieve the work burden by managing all aspects of nutrition care, be a pivotal member on wound care, palliative care, and much more!

Don't hesitate to get them involved!

## References

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28668663/>

<https://the-ria.ca/research/research-projects/making-the-most-of-mealtimes-m3/#:~:text=Making%20the%20Most%20of%20Mealtimes%20was%20the%20largest%20rese arch%20project,role%20of%20the%20mealtime%20experience.>

# Disclaimer

---

Disclaimer: The information provided in this document is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from your healthcare professional. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or health objectives. The content herein is not meant to be a replacement for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on this document. The views expressed on this site are the personal opinions of the author, who is a Registered Dietitian, and are provided in good faith. However, we make no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability with respect to the website or the information, products, services, or related graphics contained on the website for any purpose. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore strictly at your own risk. In no event will we be liable for any loss or damage including without limitation, indirect or consequential loss or damage, or any loss or damage whatsoever arising from loss of data or profits arising out of, or in connection with, the use of this website. Please consult with a healthcare professional before starting any diet, exercise, supplementation program, before taking any medication, or if you have or suspect you might have a health problem.

Copyright 2024 Long Term Care RD & Clinical Nutrition Central

Thank you!