

FOOD AND NUTRITION COURSE: CAREER AS DIETITIAN

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Abstract :

A career in food and nutrition is ideal for those seeking to promote a balanced lifestyle and improve peoples diet while helping them be biologically fit and boost their immune system, increase the energy level and reduce the risk of diseases.

The role of dietitian has come a long way since the early 1900s. Their role is still unknown to a lot of people. Some think that dietitians, as their name implies, only give out diets to make individuals lose weight, whereas this is a small part of their role. .Dietetics is the science of diet and its effects on human health.

Keywords : Career, Dietitian, Fitness, Nutrition

This field focuses on the scientific understanding of nutrition and its practical application in the field of healthcare and rehabilitation of patients some time nutritionists and dietitian terms are used as synonym but In simple terms, a nutritionist is a person who advises on matters of food and nutrition impacts on health. Based on the person's qualification, he may work as nutrition scientist, public health nutritionist, dietician nutritionist, clinical nutritionist or sports nutritionist.

On the other hand, a dietician mainly deals with dietetics. Regulation of diet according to the nutritional and calorific needs of the patients or clients is what a dietician takes care of. To practice as a dietician, a professional license and recognition from relevant authority/governing body is required. In present paper courses and jobs opportunities for dietitian are discussed.

To become a Dietician, following steps are to be followed

1. Clear class 12th with any stream (Science with Biology is preferred).
2. Pursue B.Sc/B.A Nutrition or B.Sc Food Technology.
3. Pursue a PG Diploma in Nutrition or an M.Sc. in Food and Nutrition.
4. Intern for 6-months and clear the Registered Dietician entrance exam (to obtain the Registered Dietician license from the IDA).

Stream and Subjects in Class 12th

Pass any stream in class 12th, however, the science stream (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) is highly recommended, as it opens up a wider range of courses and career opportunities. Also, taking Biology as a subject will help you build a base through a focus on human physiology.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE COURSES

- ❖ B.Sc. in Clinical Nutrition
- ❖ B.Sc. in Nutrition and Dietetics
- ❖ B.Sc. in Food Science and Nutrition
- ❖ B.Sc. in Applied Nutrition
- ❖ B.Sc. in Dietetics
- ❖ B.Sc. in Home Science (Nutrition and Food Science specialization)

Course duration: Bachelor of Science Degree course is 3 years long.

Eligibility criteria : 10+2 Science stream passed from a recognized board (or equivalent).

There are various courses that you can pursue in your graduation in order to become a dietician in India, such as B.Sc Nutrition, B.Sc Home Science, etc. The admission to all these undergraduate programs is based on merit.

1. **B.Sc. / B.A. Nutrition:** It is a 3-year course focusing on a wide variety of topics, such as human physiology, basics of nutrition, food biotechnology, health, weight loss strategies, human physiology, etc. The degree not only focuses on the general health but also provides expertise in areas such as public health, maternal and child nutrition, etc. You will also be exposed to the techniques of food preservation, food, and quality analysis, fundamentals of the bakery, etc. By the end of the course, you will be trained in planning diet charts and working on weight loss plans individually.

2. **B.Sc. Food Technology:** It is a 3-year course that focuses on the safe use of food. Food technology is the process in which various principles of food science are applied to the selection, preservation, packaging and safe distribution of food. During the course, you will be exposed to the basics of food technology, principles of food science, nutrition, food processing and engineering, food preparation, etc. Another important area in which you will be trained is food quality testing and evaluation. This course will help you in understanding the science behind food and nutrition, and will also open a wide array of options beyond nutrition.

After graduation, one can either opt for postgraduate diplomas related to nutrition and dietetics (such as Post-Graduate Diploma in Dietetics & Public Health Nutrition), or a Master's degree in Food & Nutrition. It is highly recommended to pursue the Master's to

get an edge over others in the job market. The degree gives you theoretical knowledge and practical experience, both in the form of internships and research. The topics are also taught in greater detail.

PG COURSES & FURTHER EDUCATION

Graduates have handful of PG courses to choose from. M.Sc. and PG Diploma courses can be used to specialize in disciplines such as-

- ❖ Clinical Nutrition
- ❖ Pediatric Nutrition
- ❖ Public Health Nutrition
- ❖ Food Science/Technology
- ❖ Sports Nutrition/Dietetics
- ❖ Gerontological Nutrition
- ❖ Renal Nutrition

Some of the well known PG courses available in India are- M.Sc. Clinical Nutrition, M.Sc. Food Science, M.Sc. Public Health Nutrition, M.Sc. in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics, PG Diploma in Therapeutic Nutrition, PG Diploma in Sports Science and Nutrition, PG Diploma in Food Science and Nutrition.

Course duration: M.Sc. course lasts for a period of 2 years. PG Diploma course lasts for a period of 1 year.

Furthur M. Phill and Ph.D courses are available for research and teaching purpose.

M.Sc in Food and Nutrition: Post-Graduate programs give you a chance to choose your specialization from various fields in food and nutrition such as Clinical Health (dealing with clinical patients), Child/Adolescents, Public Health, Food processing etc. The course focuses on advanced Human Nutrition, Therapeutic Nutrition, Food Science, Quality Control, etc. It is mandatory to complete a 6-8 months internship. You will be made to work in different areas and undergo rigorous training.

The dissertation is also a very important and crucial part of the course. A dissertation is a short research where you select a topic of your interest, and conduct research on it. It will give you an exposure to the research side of the field, thus giving you a chance to practically experience what you study in your books. Admission to the various postgraduate programs is through entrance exams conducted by respective colleges.

Post Graduate Diploma : Post Graduate diplomas are generally 1-year long, and are extremely comprehensive. These courses will expose you to the fundamentals of nutrition, public nutrition, therapeutic nutrition, public health nutrition and institutional food management. Different colleges have different course structures, but these are some of

the basic elements of such courses. Most of them end with a 7-8 week's compulsory internship at a healthcare centre. Admission to PG Diploma programs is through merit.

In most cases, a postgraduate diploma is enough, but if you want to study in detail and conduct a dissertation at your post-graduate level, then a M.Sc would be a better option. If you are just looking to obtain the Registered Dietician License, a PG Diploma is sufficient.

College and Institutes

Here are a few colleges for B.A, B.Sc., PG Diploma and M.Sc. Courses in food and nutrition which are known for excellence in this field:

- ❖ Lady Irwin College (New Delhi)
- ❖ Institute of Home Economics, (New Delhi)
- ❖ SNT Women's University (Mumbai)
- ❖ Women's Christian College (Chennai)
- ❖ All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Nirmala Niketan (Mumbai)
- ❖ Home science college Jabalpur (M P)

Registered Dietician

After completing graduation and post-graduation/ PG diploma, you will be termed as a Nutritionist. In order to be termed as a dietician, it is important to register with the Indian Dietetic Association as a Registered Dietician.

To qualify as a Registered Dietician, it is required to pass the entrance exam conducted by the Indian Dietetic Association (IDA). One should have either completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Nutrition & Dietetics or a M.Sc. in Food & Nutrition, followed by a 6-months internship after graduation, to be eligible for the exam.

The exam is divided into 2 papers. Paper-1 includes areas such as Human Physiology, Biochemistry, Physiologic and Metabolic Changes in Disease, Food Microbiology, Sanitation, and Hygiene, etc. Paper-2 includes Human Nutrition and Meal Management, Community Nutrition, Diet Therapy (Theory), Nutrition Education and Dietetic Counselling and Food Services Management.

JOB DETAILS

The dietitian is the link between the patient and medical team or physician in assisting difficult decisions making about nutrition care. Asian Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (ASEAN) states that the dietician role in nutrition care has been recommended an adequate source and amount of balanced nutrients according to pre-established standards of care. A dilemma occurs when the disease state of the patient

confound the adequacy of nutritional support, which has resulted in the patient's malnourishment. The dietician should be:

1. Planning food and nutrition programmes
2. Supervising meal preparations in schools and hospitals
3. Recommending dietary modifications
4. Educating patients on diets that may help their condition
5. Working with other healthcare professionals to provide a multidisciplinary healthcare approach
6. Informing on the severity of illness and complications of treatments, inclusive of the benefits and burdens of feeding in all conceivable routes.
7. Active in the patients care as the dietitian reporting on the nutritional status of the patient, as well as, the advisor to the physician and medicinal team, and
8. Informing the legal decisions that may help determine the route of care for the patient, such as more aggressive or palliative care.

Various Specialized Areas in Dietetics

Clinical Dietitians are specialists in food nutrition services in hospitals, outpatient clinics, and private practices. They assess patient nutrition, develop dietary plans, provide patient counselling, and monitor patient's progress.

Community Dietitians work in public health agencies, health and fitness clubs, and day care centers. They counsel people on food choices and direct programmes in nutrition awareness and disease prevention.

Management Dietitians specialize in food service systems or clinical management. They work in hospitals, nursing homes, school food service, cafeterias, and restaurants. They manage personnel, plan and conduct employee training programmes, design food systems, and plan budgets.

Consultant Dietitians are independent business people who work as nursing home consultants, book authors, and patient counselors in medical centers and fitness programmes. They also develop and evaluate food service systems and serve as independent advisors to industry.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES:

Government Sector: They can work with government hospitals, government's health department, schools, colleges, factories and office cafeterias for planning nutritional regiment.

Sports and Health Clubs: They can also work for sports hostels and athletes

camp. Health and recreation clubs, canteen and nursing care facilities also require the services of nutritionists and dietitians. Employment opportunities are also open to them in catering department of star hotels and restaurants.

Teaching, Research and Development: Research and development involves conducting research on various food items to ensure their quality as well as studying the effects of various types of food which helps to understand the various components of food we eat and the right type of food which provides a balanced mix of the essentials like vitamins, minerals etc. needed for the human body. They also can opt for research career mainly in universities, public or private sector research institutes, food product manufacturing companies and hospitals. Teaching the science of nutrition of dietetics in colleges and universities is also a good option.

Mass Media: Moreover they could find openings in the mass media where top priority is given to disseminating vital information on healthy living.

Gyms, Slimming Centers: along with fitness trainer dietitians are associated for proper guidance and weight management of clients.

Private Consultant/ Practitioner: Experienced dietitians may become assistant, associate, or director of a dietetic department, or become self-employed. Some dietitians specialize in areas such as renal or paediatric dietetics. Besides all these they can also work as private consultant or private practitioner.

Salary: Dietetics and Nutrition is a remunerative job. Those who are working in government hospitals, academic institutions, research institutes and other agencies have salaries as fixed by the government depending upon work profile and experience. Some private sector hotels, restaurants, food manufactures offer higher salary and attractive perks. Independent practitioner and private consultants also have good earning which largely depends upon number and nature of their clients.

Entry level: Salary varies from 10,000 to 25,000 rupees /month as per the abilities and experience.

Top position: Salary varies from rupees 25,000 to 90,000 per month depending on qualifications, position held, experience and location. The job prospects are good and are expected to grow in line with the average job.

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