

Medical Nutrition Therapy

What Is Medical Nutrition Therapy?

Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) is a nutrition-based medical service that registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) and other qualified nutrition professionals provide to treat or manage a disease state or medical condition.

MNT uses individualized, evidence-based nutrition interventions delivered as part of a health care plan in coordination with other health care providers.

What Is an RDN?

RDNs receive extensive training that combines academic preparation with hands-on, practical client and patient supervised experience, preparing them to treat and manage complex and noncomplex disease states and medical conditions.

RDNs practice as integral members of the health care team alongside physicians, nurses, and other licensed providers across hospitals, outpatient clinics, physician offices, long-term care facilities, private practice, community settings, and through telehealth. When duly authorized, RDNs are qualified independent medical providers who may receive referrals and be credentialed by public and private payers.

What Do RDNs Do When Providing MNT?

When delivering MNT, RDNs provide ongoing, structured care that typically includes:

- Assessing nutrition needs by reviewing medical history, laboratory results, medications, eating patterns, allergies, lifestyle factors, culture, food, access, and patient goals.
- Identifying nutrition-related problems that can be addressed through nutrition care (distinct from medical diagnoses).

- Developing a personalized nutrition plan tailored to the individual's medical condition and daily life.
- Providing education and behavioral counseling to help patients understand and implement the plan.
- Recommending specialized nutrition therapies when needed, such as therapeutic diets, oral nutrition supplements, enteral (tube feeding), or parenteral (IV) nutrition.
- Monitoring progress and outcomes through follow-up visits, reviewing test results, and adjusting the plan over time.

This structured approach allows nutrition care to evolve as a person's health status, treatment plan, or life circumstances change.

What Conditions Are Commonly Managed With MNT?

MNT is used to manage many different medical conditions, including but not limited to the following:

- Diabetes and prediabetes
- Chronic kidney disease
- Heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol
- Obesity
- Gastrointestinal disorders, like celiac disease, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and ulcerative colitis
- Malnutrition, including cancer-related malnutrition
- Conditions affecting swallowing or digestion
- Eating Disorders