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What Can I Expect When I Go and See a Dietitian?

Your doctor may have suggested that you visit a dietitian, or you may have decided that you want to speak to someone about healthy eating or your diet. Working with a dietitian is the best way to get personal advice about food and lifestyle choices that can affect your health. They will help you identify eating habits and patterns, answer any questions about food or nutrient needs, and give you knowledge and skills to help you make the most out of your food choices.

What happens when I see a dietitian?

The first appointment, whether it be in-person, online, or on the phone, will be about 45 minutes to 1 hour. During this appointment, your dietitian will ask you questions to get to know you and the reason you contacted them. You may want to make changes in the way that you eat, have a food allergy, digestive issue, or you have a nutrition-related health condition like diabetes, heart disease, or high cholesterol. Each person's reason for speaking with a dietitian is different. A dietitian's job is to work with you as a partner to look at your needs and set goals.

Your dietitian will need specific details about you to give you personal and practical information that you can use. The questions your dietitian will ask you will depend on the reason you are visiting them.

What kinds of questions will a dietitian ask me?

Your dietitian may ask you about:

- your current diet
- what types of foods you or your family like to eat
- your culture and food traditions
- how often you eat
- how much you eat
- when you eat
- where you eat
- your food skills
- your food budget
- any concerns you have about your eating habits
- your general health/medical history
- any medications or supplements that you take
- any challenges you face buying, preparing or eating foods
- whether you require special equipment to eat or prepare food
- your height, age and weight (to assess your nutrient needs)
- how often you exercise

Asking these questions will help your dietitian get an idea of your diet and lifestyle and any healthy or unhealthy habits that you have. It also gives them the information that they need to

do a nutrition assessment. This means that your dietitian can figure out if you are getting too much or too little of anything in your diet.

How do I prepare for my appointment with a dietitian?

It's important to think about your goals. What is it that you want to change or improve? What do you want to work on with the dietitian?

Bring a list of medications or supplements with you and be able to talk about your medical history.

In some cases, it may be helpful to keep a food diary. This is a list of everything you are eating and drinking for at least 3 days so that your dietitian can get an idea of your food habits and eating patterns.

Write out any questions that you want to ask during your appointment.

If you feel it would be helpful, you can ask a family member or friend to come with you to your appointment.

What will I take away from my first visit with a dietitian?

Your dietitian will consider your personal goals, culture and food traditions. They will think about the information that you have given them about your diet history, medical history, eating patterns, personal preferences and create a nutrition plan for you.

Your dietitian will use or give you resources to help you with your goals like food models to show you healthy portion sizes, sample meal plans, healthy recipes, or a grocery shopping list template. You may be given written information to take home with you.

Always feel free to ask your dietitian questions or let them know about any concerns that you have during your appointment.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You should expect to have a follow-up appointment. Diet and lifestyle changes are a gradual process and learning new information and skills can take time. A follow-up appointment is generally shorter and costs less than an initial appointment. You and your dietitian can decide on the number of appointments that you need and when they should be.

During a follow-up appointment, your dietitian will track your progress, provide you with more tips and information, adjust your nutrition plan based on how things are going, and discuss the next steps. These appointments allow you to ask questions, talk about what's going well, what's not going well, learn about new tools or resources and receive support and feedback from your dietitian.

Get started! Find a dietitian near you

It's easy to find a dietitian near you, visit www.dietitians.ca/find. You can search by postal code, city, and/or health condition.

Many dietitians offer services virtually and most employee benefit plans cover dietitian services. Check your plan today.

Visit www.NutritionMonth2023.ca for more on how to connect with a dietitian and for trusted food and nutrition information.