

# ***Coverage for Nutrition Services:***

## **How can I refer my patients to a registered dietitian nutritionist?**

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We encourage you to make the referral for medical nutrition therapy (MNT) to a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN). Research indicates that since the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), coverage for MNT has increased in the private payer market. This is attributed to the “link to coverage” from the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) Grade A/B Recommendations. Over the years, there has been an increase in coverage for MNT for many cardiometabolic risk factors such as diabetes, pre-diabetes, metabolic syndrome, overweight/obesity, dyslipidemia, and hypertension.

### ***A Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) is a....***

- Lifestyle change facilitator skilled in motivational interviewing and behavior modification.
- Food and nutrition expert who has completed a BS or MS or a PhD degree and a supervised internship, passed a national exam, and keeps up with the continuing education requirements from the Commission on Dietetics Registrations (CDR).
- Bearer of the “RDN” or “RD” credential. These are legally protected titles beyond that of a “nutritionist.” Unlike RDN or RD, there is no legal definition of a “nutritionist.”

### ***Finding and Partnering with a RDN***

- Three ways:
  - 1) Go to <https://www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert> to find a RDN in your area by zip code,
  - 2) Contact the outpatient nutrition department of your local healthcare system
  - 3) Check if your patient’s health care plan maintains a provider list of RDNs
- Once located, have your staff contact the RDN to discuss availability, billing, and areas of expertise.
- Prior to the visit, send a formal referral, along with a clinic note, and relevant lab data.
- After each MNT visit, the RDN communicates with the referring health care provider regarding patients’ progress with achieving their nutrition goals including nutrition assessment and intervention. This is a standard of practice.

## ***Coverage for MNT by RDN***

- Coverage of MNT by a RDN for those with diabetes or renal disease is available to Medicare Part B beneficiaries across the country.
- Commercial payer coverage of MNT for dyslipidemia provided by RDNs is good and continues to expand because of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and stakeholder efforts.
- Most large payers currently cover nutrition counseling for cardiometabolic risk factors (dyslipidemia, hypertension, diabetes, pre-diabetes, overweight/obesity). The RDN will need to verify each patient's benefits and coverage for the service, but there is a good probability it will be covered to some extent.
- Medicaid coverage of MNT varies by each state, check with your state's policy for both traditional Medicaid and Medicaid Managed Care plans.
- Since 2011, Medicare has covered intensive behavioral therapy (IBT) for obesity if services are provided by PCPs, who may partner with a RDN.
- Payment for MNT services for cardiometabolic risk factors delivered via telehealth is available through Medicaid and commercial payers based on state laws and regulations and individual payer policies. MNT and IBT for Obesity are on the list of Medicare-approved telehealth services subject to federal laws and regulations. Existing eligibility and coverage parameters apply.

## ***Resources for Getting Started with MNT Referral***

*Although these resources are intended for primary health care providers, they could also be beneficial to non-primary health care providers.*

- <https://www.eatrightpro.org/payment/getting-started/referrals-and-primary-care-partnership/referrals-to-a-registered-dietitian-nutritionist-primary-care-provider-toolkit>
- <https://www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert>