

What is a Registered Dietitian?

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Do you know the difference between a Registered Dietitian (R.D.) and a nutritionist? Health professionals use different titles to identify their areas of practice. While some use the terms R.D. and nutritionist interchangeably, there are typically vast differences in their educational background.

In order to obtain the Registered Dietitian credential, there are several educational and professional requirements that must be completed.

- Receive a bachelor's degree from a U.S. accredited university or college and course work approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education of the American Dietetic Association
- Complete a 6- 12 month accredited internship at a health-care facility, community agency, or a foodservice corporation combined with undergraduate and graduate studies
- Pass a national examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration
- Obtain state licensure as required
- Complete continuing professional educational requirements to maintain registration

In contrast to the stringent educational requirements of the Registered Dietitian, the title "nutritionist" is an unregulated term that does not indicate the educational background which is required to manage nutrition and disease. Anyone can label themselves as a "nutritionist", and there is no reliable way to measure the meaning of this title. If you are in need of disease specific nutrition management, seek the services of a Registered and Licensed Dietitian.

Registered Dietitians practice in various settings. Stanly Regional Medical Center employs both clinical and outpatient Registered Dietitians. In our next edition, we will describe the responsibilities and services that our clinical and outpatient Registered Dietitians provide at Stanly Regional.

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