Dietetic Technician

Overview

Dietetic technicians work with dietitians to plan menus and prepare food for people with special nutritional needs. They often work in hospitals, nursing homes, and long-term care facilities. They are also employed by schools, daycare centers, weight management clinics, government agencies and prisons.

Dietetic technicians know a great deal about nutrition and how what we eat and drink influences our health. For people who have food allergies or other special dietary needs, dietetic technicians develop and prepare tasty, nutritious recipes that satisfy dietary restrictions.

Our eating habits have a significant impact on our health. Changes in diet can help reduce the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other health problems. Dietetic technicians help people take control of their health by helping them understand how to make better choices about the food they eat.

Salary: $26,500 - $36,800 [1]

Years in school: 3 - 4 after high school graduation

Job outlook: Excellent

Related Careers

Behavioral Science/Health Education
Nurses Aide/Nursing Assistant
Vocational/Licensed Practical Nurse

Working Conditions

Dietetic technicians are usually employed by organizations that are responsible for feeding large groups of people, including people who have special dietary requirements. Dietetic technicians work in hospitals, nursing homes, retirement communities, corporate cafeterias, schools, prisons, and other large facilities.

Some dietetic technicians work in private practice, helping to develop healthy menus for individual patients as part of an overall treatment plan. Some focus on education, such as teaching children, new mothers and other people the importance of proper nutrition. Others work in the food service industry, helping suppliers create healthier prepared foods and ensuring that food labels are complete and accurate.

The work environment depends on the nature of the dietetic technician’s job.

Many work in large institutional kitchens, which can get hot and steamy. They spend a great deal of time on their feet, and frequently suffer minor cooking-related injuries, such as knife cuts, burns and eye irritations. Other dietetic technicians work in offices, administrative complexes or government agencies.

Those who are directly involved in food preparation can work at all hours, particularly early in the morning, including weekends and holidays. Many dietetic technicians work part-time.

Dietetic technicians who work directly with patients need good communication skills and the ability to cope with people who are sick. Teamwork is essential, as well, as dietetic technicians almost always collaborate with other health care providers.

Creativity and highly developed senses of smell and taste help the dietetic technician prepare food that patients will enjoy. To avoid contamination and injury, dietetic technicians must adhere to rigorous standards of safety and cleanliness.
Salary Range & Outlook

According to the American Dietetic Association's 2005 Compensation and Benefits Survey, most dietetic technicians earn between $26,500 and $36,800 per year, depending on where they work and how much responsibility they have on the job.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects employment prospects for dietetic technicians to rise, because of America’s aging population and increased attention to the impact of proper nutrition on health. Job growth is expected to be greatest in nursing homes, residential care facilities and physician clinics.

Academic Requirements

To become a dietetic technician, you must complete a two-year degree at an accredited community college, with coursework in general science, the science of nutrition, and foodservice systems management.

You can then enroll in a specialized training program approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education (CADE). The program includes 450 hours of supervised practice working in actual food preparation environments.

In your training, you will learn how to talk with patients to determine nutritional goals and how to prepare food that meets a variety of dietary requirements. You’ll study menu planning, portion control, the economics of food preparation and safety protocols for food preparation and storage.

To become certified, you must pass a national examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR). Continuing education is required to maintain certification.

Professional Associations

American Dietetic Association

Funding Opportunities

Search for funding opportunities in this field Search for enrichment programs in this field

Source

www.eatright.org

Learn more about this field:

Nutrition/Dietetics