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## **Nutrition Notes – August 2008**

By Donna Wolf R.D. CLT

### **Registered Dietitian versus Nutritionist**

The distinction is important! Anyone can use the term nutritionist, even without any formal education or training. Unlike the credential RD, it's not a professionally regulated term, which means that there are no minimum qualifications for a person to call him or herself a nutritionist. A nutritionist is commonly defined as a person who advises people on dietary matters relating to health, well being and optimal nutrition. Since the term is not regulated or credentialed, it is also often used by people without training who may actually do harm by giving inappropriate advice. Therefore, when you hear the term "nutritionist" you need to request more information about the person's qualifications.

A Registered Dietitian (RD) has at a minimum:

- 1) graduated with a baccalaureate degree from a US accredited university or college
- 2) graduated from an accredited undergraduate dietetics program
- 3) completed a 900 hour industry-related internship, and
- 4) successfully passed the national registration exam

An RD must also maintain his or her credentials with continuing education. Most RD's have even more specialized training & education.

Dietitians promote sound nutrition through education, help prevent and treat illnesses by promoting healthy eating habits, scientifically evaluate clients' diets, and conduct research. The letters "RD" after a person's name signifies that he/she has completed all requirements established by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (the credentialing agency for The American Dietetic Association).

Registered dietitians (RD's) work in a variety of employment settings including health care, business and industry, public health, education, research, and private practice. Within each of these settings, **RD's specialize in different areas of the nutrition field** such as chronic health issues like diabetes, cardiovascular, and renal diseases; weight management; allergies and food sensitivities; personal chefs; sports nutrition; child nutrition; and much more. With food and nutrition being a vast field, specialization is common among registered dietitians.

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