Dietitians
Registered dietitians and nutrition practices
dietitians.fyi

GUIDE

Dietitian vs nutritionist: what the titles mean

RD, RDN and registered dietitian titles are regulated credentials. Nutritionist is not protected in most places. Check the register before you book.

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Dietitian titles are regulated in many places, with different rules by country. A nutritionist may or may not be. The titles are not interchangeable.

The titles and credentials

In the United States, whether the "dietitian" title is regulated depends on the state: each state sets its own licence rules, and they differ. The Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR) issues the Registered Dietitian (RD) credential. Since 2013, registrants can also use Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN). CDR says both titles refer to the same credential. [CDR, cdrnet.org/rdn, accessed 2026-11-13.]

In the United Kingdom, dietitians are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). You can check any registrant on the HCPC register. [HCPC, hcpc-uk.org, accessed 2026-11-13.]

In Canada, Dietitians of Canada runs a member directory of regulated dietitians. Registration itself sits with provincial regulatory colleges. [Dietitians of Canada, dietitians.ca, accessed 2026-11-13.]

In Australia, Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is a professional credential run by Dietitians Australia, not government registration, and Australia has no statutory register for dietitians. Their Find a Dietitian tool connects you with APDs. [Dietitians Australia, dietitiansaustralia.org.au, accessed 2026-11-13.]

In Ireland, dietitians register with CORU, the Dietitians Registration Board. [CORU, coru.ie, accessed 2026-11-13.]

Why the difference matters

To hold a regulated title, a practitioner completes an approved education program, a supervised practice period and a registration exam, then keeps the registration current. CDR requires registration renewal every five years with continuing education. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (the US professional body behind eatright.org) maintains the public Find a Nutrition Expert tool for RD/RDN and NDTR/DTR credentials. [Eat Right, eatright.org, accessed 2026-11-13.]

"Nutritionist" is not protected in most US states or in the UK. It does not by itself prove any education, registration or exam. A practice can employ both: an RD who leads the clinical work, and staff who use other titles.

What to do before you book

1. Ask which credential the practitioner holds and where they are registered.
2. Check the register yourself. Links for each body are in our guide on checking a credential.
3. Confirm the registration is current on the day you book, not the day the website was built.

A directory listing is a record, not an endorsement. Registration status can change after our check date.

Sources

All sources fetched and checked 2026-11-13:

- CDR: Registered Dietitian (RD) or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) Certification
- Eat Right: Find a Nutrition Expert
- HCPC: Check the Register
- Dietitians of Canada: Find a Dietitian
- Dietitians Australia: Find a Dietitian
- CORU: Dietitians Registration Board

Frequently asked questions

Is a nutritionist the same as a dietitian?

No. In the US, Canada, the UK and Ireland the regulated titles are dietitian, registered dietitian (RD) or registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN). In Australia the credential is accredited practising dietitian (APD), a professional credential rather than government registration. Nutritionist is not a protected title in most places. Anyone can use it.

What does RDN mean?

Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. The Commission on Dietetic Registration issues the RD credential and allows RDN as an alternative title for the same credential. Both mean the same registration.

Sources

cdrnet.org — https://www.cdrnet.org/rdn
eatright.org — https://www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert
hcpc-uk.org — https://www.hcpc-uk.org/check-the-register/
dietitians.ca — https://www.dietitians.ca/find-a-dietitian
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coru.ie — https://www.coru.ie