

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Dietary consultation with a dietician

Definition of a dietary consultation

Part of a care programme prescribed by a doctor or initiated at the request of an individual. It includes assessment of eating habits, negotiation of the goals of dietary care, implementation of a strategy and follow-up of the individual's nutritional progress for educational, preventive or therapeutic purposes.

Depending on the aim of a consultation, dietary management requires defined procedures for coordination between health professionals and continuity of care.

AIMS

- Define the content of a dietary consultation, how an interview should be conducted, and the specific elements of a dietary care programme.
- Describe current tools for data collection and for carrying out the dietician's work.
- Identify traceability data for nutritional care in the patient's record.
- Define procedures for coordination between health professionals to ensure continuity of care.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

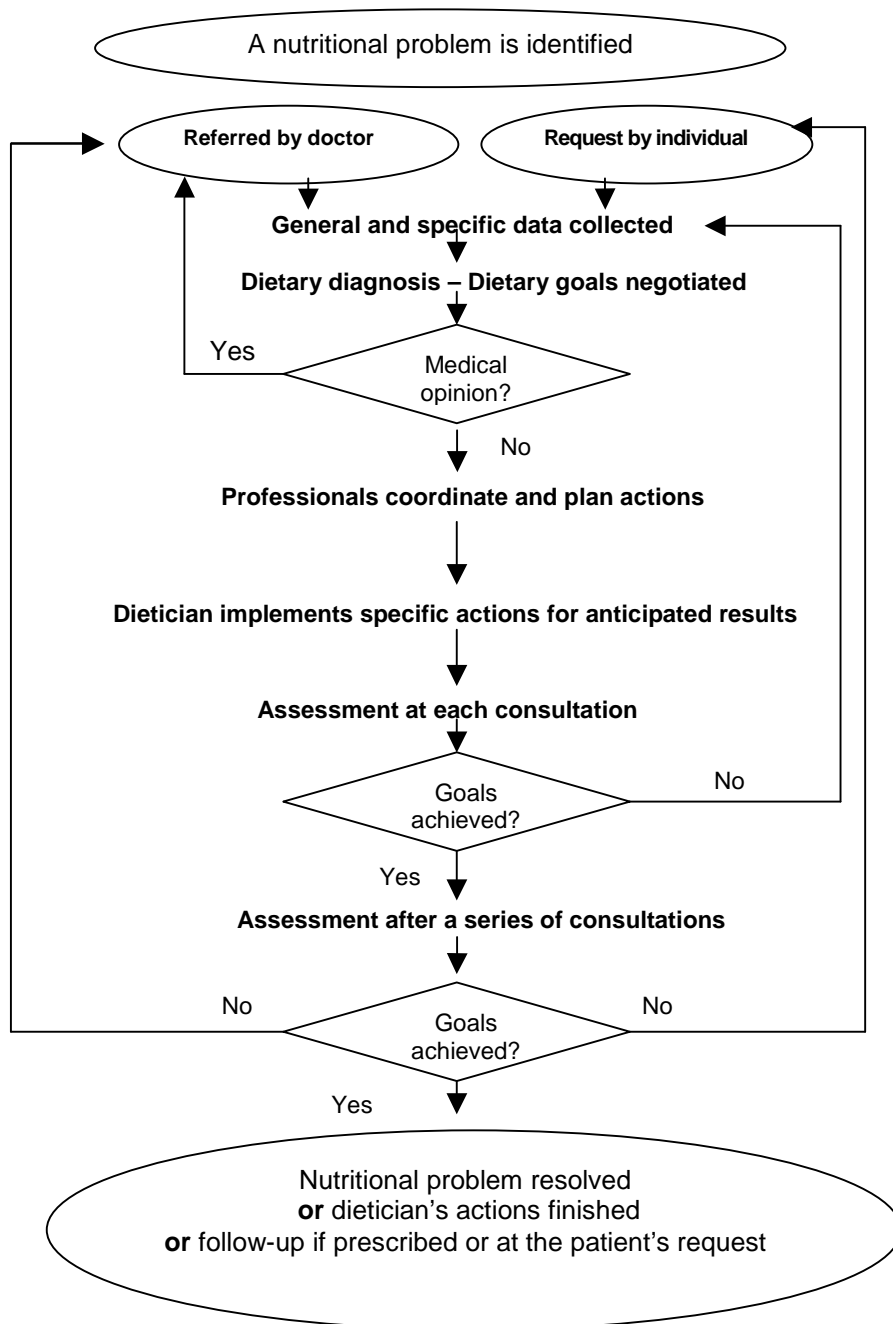
- Dieticians working in health care organisations, in independent practice, within a shared care network and in public health, for their everyday practice.
- Professionals who work with dieticians: doctors, nurses, midwives, social workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and psychologists.
This document may also be used to draw up guidelines on specific dietary care for adults, adolescents aged over 16, and the elderly. Dietary consultations for children aged under 16 will be dealt with in a future document.

DEFINITION OF A DIETARY CARE PROGRAMME

A graduated process intended to see that the nutritional intake of individuals meets their requirements and therapeutic needs. It takes account of personal preferences, cultural and religious habits, individual capabilities, and preserves the pleasure of eating.

A dietary care programme provides a framework for a dietary consultation. It includes specific tools, strategies and assessments that depend on the type of consultation (therapeutic, educational or preventive).

STEPS IN A DIETARY CARE PROGRAMME



TYPES OF DIETARY CONSULTATION

There are three types consultation, each with a specific content. Patient information and education are an integral part of a dietary care programme.

1. Initial consultation

- If the patient is referred by a doctor, the initial dietary consultation will provide:
 - either a dietary diagnosis alone and planning for any follow-up consultations required
 - or a dietary diagnosis including therapeutic, educational or preventive action and planning for any follow-up consultations.
- If the initial consultation is at the patient's request, it may result in:
 - either a dietary diagnosis alone and planning for any follow-up consultations required
 - or a dietary diagnosis completed with preventive action and planning for any follow-up consultations.
 - If the dietician finds that the patient's request is related to a health problem, they should send the data collected to a doctor nominated by the patient, with the patient's agreement.

2. Follow-up consultation(s)

- They either complete the dietary assessment needed to reach a final diagnosis
- or assess the goals of dietary care decided at the initial consultation and implement preventive action, nutritional therapy and/or therapeutic education, and/or follow-up of the patient's nutritional status.

3. Final consultation

- It assesses the overall goals of dietary care decided during previous consultations
- It proposes a further cycle of follow-up consultations with the doctor's agreement, or concludes the care programme.

FEATURES OF THE CONSULTATION

- **Communication - conditions and techniques**
 - active listening
 - appropriate use of open and/or closed questions
 - reformulating questions
 - willingness to let the patient be the decision-maker
 - emotional sensitivity: empathy and feedback.
- **Content of the consultation**
 - welcome
 - data collection, analysis, decision-taking, resolution of problems, assessment
 - summing up: review of the various stages, decisions taken, closing the interview on a positive note.

WHAT THE DIETICIAN DOES

- **Carry out detailed assessments**
 - assess eating and lifestyle habits in detail
 - assess any problems in changing eating habits, and suggest solutions
- **Provide information**
 - give advice tailored to the individual
 - provide information on links between disease and eating habits; identification of the patient's risk factors; food composition, preparation and storage; benefits of obtaining advice on diet.
- **Provide therapeutic education on nutrition in line with principles and stages**
- **Help the patient make decisions**
 - negotiate, raise awareness, help choose and prioritise possible actions
 - provide choice of methods, including educational methods
- **Assist with nutritional rehabilitation**
 - help adapt eating habits, i.e. measure and analyse food consumption in order to reach treatment or disease-related nutritional targets
 - provide help and support in solving everyday problems
- **Advise doctors**
 - on oral nutritional supplements and/or enteral feeding products
 - on vitamin or mineral supplements.

TEAM COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Nutritional care is often delivered by a team. The dietician's actions and, if required, dietary strategy support, are planned with all health professionals concerned.

CONTENT OF PATIENT'S RECORD

- **Traceability data to ensure continuity of care.**
- **Doctor's referral:** Reasons for the dietary consultation, medical diagnosis and current treatment, aims of treatment, medical and surgical history
- **Written baseline report:** Specific data, diagnosis,, dietary aims, actions negotiated with the patient, documents given to the patient, letters or other forms of contact with health professionals (with the patient's agreement)
- **Written report of follow-up appointments and final dietary assessment:** Changes in specific data, assessment of actions negotiated with the patient, changes made in eating habits, need for further follow-up (and if so, when), documents given to the patient, letters or other forms of contact with health professionals (with the patient's agreement).

KEEPING UP TO DATE

Dieticians need to take part in continuing professional development throughout their professional career to maintain the quality of their consultations.

This Quick Reference Guide is an English summary of the main points of the French guidelines:
« Consultation diététique réalisée par un diététicien » - Recommandation pour la pratique clinique – janvier 2006
The full guidelines and supporting document (in French) can be found at www.has-sante.fr