



Medical Conditions that Benefit from Medical Nutrition Therapy

Compiled by: Julie Zikmund, RD, LRD, MPH

The nutrition services team plays an integral role in providing food and nutrition that assists to manage diseases in the healthcare setting. Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) is the nutrition assessment and treatment of a condition, illness, or injury that places an individual at risk, involving the assessment of nutrition status and treatment/intervention.

This list includes ten medical conditions that benefit from MNT.

1. Diabetes: Meal planning, carbohydrate (CHO) counting, and blood glucose monitoring are the cornerstones in diabetes management. Balancing CHO with medications and exercise assists in blood glucose control and a reduction of complications due to hyperglycemia. Learn more: www.diabetes.org

2. Heart Disease: As the leading cause of death in the United States, heart disease is most commonly linked to hyperlipidemia – or high blood cholesterol. MNT for heart disease prevention includes the management of blood cholesterol, including limiting saturated and trans-fats in the diet to improve LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, triglycerides, and total cholesterol levels. Learn more: www.heart.org

3. Stroke: Strokes are most commonly linked to hyperlipidemia (see above) and hypertension (HTN)–high blood pressure (see below). When a person has a stroke, dysphagia (difficulty swallowing) may be a side effect. MNT for dysphagia may include altered consistency diets and thickened liquids as outlined by the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI). Learn more: www.stroke.org and www.iddsi.org

4. Hypertension (HTN): High blood pressure increases the risk for stroke, heart disease, and kidney disease. MNT to improve HTN includes limiting salt/sodium intake and increasing potassium rich foods. This can be accomplished with the

DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet. Learn more: www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure and www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan

5. Cancer: Excess body weight (obesity), poor nutrition, lack of exercise, and alcohol consumption are contributing factors for cancer. Excess weight and obesity alone increase risks of developing 13 types of cancer. MNT for cancer prevention includes maintaining a healthy weight and a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fiber rich beans and peas, and whole grains. Learn more: www.cancer.org

6. Osteoporosis: Osteoporosis means “porous bone” or bones that have lost density and increase risk of fracture. Bones are constantly renewing, so risk prevention includes adequate calcium and vitamin D intake (especially in youth), prevention of eating disorders, and weight bearing exercise. MNT focuses on the consumption of calcium rich foods and adequate vitamin D. Learn more: www.bones.nih.gov

7. Obesity: Obesity is a major health problem affecting all ages in the United States. Hallmarks of MNT for obesity treatment include caloric intake, portion control, balancing the diet, food journaling, energy expenditure & exercise, behavior modification, social support, and at times, weight loss surgery. Learn more: www.cdc.gov/obesity

8. Kidney Disease: Of all the diseases, kidney disease is one of the most complex. The intake of protein, sodium, potassium, phosphorus, and fluids are carefully regulated from day-to-day. Actual nutrient restrictions are based on age, degree of kidney disease, treatment, and other nutrition factors. Learn more: www.niddk.nih.gov

9. Celiac Disease: Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease, which requires a strict gluten-free (GF) diet. Following a GF diet allows for healing of the villi in the small intestine, allowing for proper absorption of nutrients. The MNT for Celiac Disease focuses on removing gluten from the diet and replacing it with GF items, preventing cross contact, label reading, and other nutrient deficiencies common with Celiac Disease. Learn more: www.celiac.org and www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/celiac-disease

10. Food Allergies: With a food allergy reaction, the body’s immune system overreacts, triggering a histamine response with symptoms ranging from mild to severe - with some instances leading to anaphylaxis. The most common food allergies include eggs, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy. MNT food allergies include strict avoidance of the food, preventing cross contact, and label reading. Learn more: www.aaaai.org and www.foodallergy.org