

ABOUT THE ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

Members of the Academy play a key role in shaping the public's food choices, improving people's nutritional status, and preventing and treating chronic disease. Academy members are valued for their expertise in translating science and evidence to empower consumers to make healthy choices through education, medical nutrition therapy and intensive behavior therapy.

To achieve its vision, the Academy works with policy leaders at every level of government to promote health and reduce the burden of chronic disease through nutrition services and interventions.

Vision: A world where all people thrive through the transformative power of food and nutrition.

Mission: Accelerate improvements in global health and well-being through food and nutrition.

Disease Prevention and Treatment

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and obesity are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nutrition plays a critical role in the prevention of these chronic diseases. Registered dietitian nutritionists are uniquely qualified to prevent, treat and manage chronic disease. Nutrition and dietetic technicians, registered, are also an integral part of health care and food service management teams.

Academy members are committed to improving the health of all populations through effective nutrition policies and programs that eliminate health disparities. Health disparities exist when the differences in health outcomes are impacted by racial, ethnic, geographic or socioeconomic status. Through Academy members' research, teaching and community outreach to provide nutrition services, the disparity margin can be narrowed in urban, suburban and rural areas.

The Academy recommends policies for disease prevention and treatment that:

- Support medical nutrition therapy as an effective disease management strategy that reduces risk of chronic disease, slows disease progression and reduces symptoms.
- Fund cost-effective nutrition interventions that focus on personal health practices to reduce the prevalence and severity of the leading chronic diseases in the United States.
- Support evidence-based prevention efforts for chronic diseases.
- Recognize the need for the comprehensive treatment of obesity, including behavioral counseling provided by qualified providers.
- Support expansion of and investment in nutrition research at National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and United States Department of Agriculture that will help reduce the national burden of diet-related chronic diseases.



Lifecycle Nutrition

Nutrition plays a critical role in every stage of life and supports health, wellness and improved quality of life.

The Academy and its members work to improve health and reduce food insecurity for pregnant women, new mothers and their children, school children, and older Americans aging at home and in long term care facilities.



The Academy's policy recommendations for lifecycle nutrition include:

Prenatal, Maternal and Infant Health

- Expand programs and services to reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality.
- Support the expansion of education and support for breast-feeding mothers to ensure infants have the best start to life.
- Support the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children to continue to give all children a healthy start to life.

School Age Children

- Align school nutrition standards with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide technical assistance and training to school nutrition professionals to meet the standards.
- Expand access to healthy food for all children through universal school meals during the school day.
- Expand access to healthy meals for children in need during the summer and outside of regular school hours.
- Support access to high-quality child care programs that include nutritious meals and snacks.
- Ensure that immigrant children and adolescents in the custody of any federal agency receive an adequate supply of healthful and safe foods that promote optimal physical, cognitive and social growth and development. Breast-fed infants should have continuing access to their mother's milk.
- Support farm to table programs to connect schools, communities and farmers.

Nutrition for Older Adults

- Support adequate funding for Older Americans Act programs that help to maintain the independence of our nation's elderly.
- Expand evidence-based nutrition interventions and nutrition education in the Older Americans Act programs to ensure that food is paired with access to quality health care professionals.
- Advocate for malnutrition screening and treatment through better alignment of Medicare and Older Americans Act programs and services.

Healthy Food Systems and Access

The Academy recognizes that many of the populations we serve are at risk for food insecurity, foodborne and waterborne illnesses. Effective nutrition counseling and interventions help provide solutions to these issues.

The Academy's policy recommendations for healthy food systems and access include:

Food Security

- Increase access to affordable, healthy foods and safe water in communities, places of work and schools.
- Decrease the access to and marketing of foods and drinks of low nutritional value, particularly to youth.
- Support efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to link healthy food to positive health outcomes.
- Connect individuals and families to federal nutrition programs that provide benefits to families and support local economies.
- Evaluate ways to increase access to healthy foods through SNAP.
- Support efforts to connect food, nutrition and sustainability of our food system including agriculture and food service employee health.
- Ensure all military families and veterans have the means and the access to provide healthy foods for their families.
- Ensure the safety and integrity of the water and food supply especially during emergencies.



Food Systems Supply and Management

- Align agricultural policies with health policies.
- Ensure the safety of the water supply.
- Support the United States' national food waste reduction goal.
- Support efforts to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act, to provide a risk-based food safety system approach and focus on comprehensive science-based preventive measures across the total food safety system to reduce illness and death.

Nutrition Education

- Support education empowering consumers to make informed, healthful choices using the revised Nutrition Facts Label.
- Support the development and implementation of evidence-based, transparently crafted Dietary Guidelines for Americans by reviewing proposed research protocols, evaluating evidence reviews and making recommendations to inform the Scientific Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.
- Support and strengthen strong, comprehensive, culturally appropriate and well-coordinated government funded nutrition education programs (ie. WIC, SNAP-Ed, EFNEP and Team Nutrition).

Quality Health Care

Nutrition services are an essential component of comprehensive high-quality health care throughout the lifecycle and must be patient-centered. Stable, sufficient and reliable funding is necessary for our health care system to provide access to crucial benefits.

The Academy's policy recommendations for quality health care include:

- Support nutrition informatics that demonstrate return on investment for nutrition services as the implementation of the electronic health record continues to expand.
- Advance federal, state and interstate policies facilitating the use of telehealth to provide nutrition care services, including to people living in rural and underserved areas.
- Protect consumers by ensuring that nutrition education, counseling and interventions are delivered by qualified and competent providers.

Workforce Demand

- Continue to support efforts that meet the health care needs of consumers, including a diverse health care workforce.
- Provide more job opportunities for qualified nutrition professionals.

Quality Measures

- Advance the Academy-led malnutrition electronic clinical quality measures and their inclusion in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Inpatient Quality Reporting Program.

Reimbursement

- Support lowering health care costs through the expansion of services provided by registered dietitian nutritionists for nutrition-related chronic diseases.

Health Equity

The Academy is committed to addressing health disparities experienced by communities of color. Health disparities exist when the differences in health outcomes are impacted by racial, ethnic, geographic or socioeconomic status. The Academy advocates for the support of and investment in policies and practices that acknowledge health disparities and design interventions to intentionally address them.

The most recent U.S. Census reports that racial and ethnic minorities make up approximately 40 percent of the population. As the nation becomes more diverse, health professionals are tasked with treating an increasing number of patients from different cultural backgrounds. It is not uncommon for language and other cultural barriers to exist, which may increase barriers to adequate care. Understanding the health disparities that exist and the social determinants that contribute to poorer health is needed to better address these patients and the community. In order to do so, there needs to be more data disaggregation among subgroups within a population as the status of a group as a whole can mask disparities within.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have reported that people from racial and ethnic minority groups are being hospitalized and dying from COVID-19 at much higher rates than whites. The Academy recognizes that it is essential to address the root causes of health inequity by examining the social determinants of health that play a role in the etiology and amplification of chronic health disparities. These root causes of health disparities must be addressed to achieve health equity. Specifically, the Academy is advocating for the following initiatives to address health inequity: invest in SNAP to address food security; expand access to Medical Nutrition Therapy and Intensive Behavioral Therapy; and increase diversity in allied health professions, including dietetics.