

Nutritionist

Nutritionists are the heart of a patient's health by using their knowledge of the science of food to help individuals and groups make the right choices about what they eat.

Working life

You'll teach and inform the public and health professionals about diet and nutrition. You'll aim to promote good health and prevent disease in individuals and communities.



Nutritionists work in

- public health
- the community
- health projects
- industry
- their own private practice
- charities and voluntary organisations
- overseas aid projects

- research

Your work as a nutritionist could involve

- educating individuals and groups (with a lot of contact with the public)
- making policy to shape nutritional advice and guidelines for communities (with less or no contact with the public)

Who will I work with?

You may work with health care professionals such as nurses [1] and dietitians [2]. You may also work with other agencies such as schools or voluntary organisations.

Dietitians and nutritionists have different roles and training and are regulated by different bodies.

You will aim to promote good health and prevent disease in individuals and communities

Find out more about the work and training of dietitians [2]

Entry requirements

There is no set entry route to become a nutritionist. Most nutritionists have a qualification in nutrition, usually a degree or a Masters.

The Association for Nutrition [3] (AfN) maintains the UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists (UKVRN) to distinguish nutrition practitioners who meet rigorously applied training, competence and professional practice criteria. There are three categories of UKVRN registrant:

- registered nutritionist (RNutr) with nutrition specialism in public health, nutrition science, sport & exercise, food or animal nutrition
- associate nutritionist (ANutr)
- fellow of AfN (FAfN)

All registrants have a degree in nutrition sciences or substantial peer-recognised professional nutrition experience and adhere to AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance.

For more information about registering on the UKVRN, please contact the Association for Nutrition [3]

There is a list of accredited courses on the AfN website. Courses may have different titles, including

- human nutrition
- public health nutrition
- nutrition and public health
- food and nutrition

To get onto a nutrition degree course you usually need

- two or three A levels, including biology or chemistry, along with five GCSEs (grades A-C [4]), including English language, maths and science

or alternative level 3 qualifications, such as

- BTEC, HND or HNC which includes biology or chemistry
- relevant NVQ
- science-based Access course
- equivalent Scottish or Irish qualifications

However, each institution sets its own entry requirements, so it's important to check carefully.

For a Masters you need a relevant degree or professional qualification.

Skills and personal characteristics needed

Nutritionists need to be

- interested in science and food
- positive and able to motivate others
- understanding of other people and their lifestyles
- able to explain complex things simply

You'll also need

- an understanding of science
- organisation skills
- communication skills
- business skills for private/freelance work

Training and development

You will have the training you need to do the job which is likely to include an introduction to the area and local groups and agencies.

As mentioned above, nutritionists can apply to register with the Association for Nutrition [3] (AfN). Some also become members of the Nutrition Society [5]. Nutritionists need to make sure they keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Both AfN and the Nutrition Society offer training courses and conferences where nutritionists can update their skills and network with others doing similar work.

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Pay and conditions

Nutritionists working in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) [6] pay system. You would typically start on AfC [7] band 5, but you should check individual job vacancies for details. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions at bands 6 and above.

Most nutritionists working in or with the NHS work standard hours, which are likely to be around 37.5 a week. They may work some evenings or weekends. Elsewhere the hours may vary depending on the needs of the employer or the project.

Terms and conditions will usually be different for nutritionists working outside of the NHS.

- **Where the role can lead**

As you gain experience, you can take on more senior roles in projects and departments. You could progress to larger projects or become a project leader or co-ordinator.

- **Job market and vacancies**

If you're applying for a role either directly in the NHS or in an organisation that provides NHS services, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values apply in your everyday work. Find out more about NHS values [8].

Most NHS trusts advertise their vacancies on NHS Jobs [9]. Some advertise on their own websites.

- **Further information**

- Association for Nutrition [10]
- British Nutrition Foundation [11]
- The Nutrition Society [12]

Other roles that may interest you

- Dietitian [13]
- Dietetic assistant [14]
- Clinical bioinformatics health informatics [15]
- Cellular sciences [16]

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/nutritionist>

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/dietitian> [3] <http://www.associationfornutrition.org/>
[4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Grades_A-C [5] <http://www.nutritionandsociety.org/>
[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-nhs/nhs-pay-and-benefits/agenda-change-pay-rates>
[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#AfC>

[8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution> [9] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
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