

## Είμαι Διαιτολόγος

### I am a Dietitian

...with over 13 years experience in the field of Clinical, Foodservice and Business Dietetics, I currently teach Nutrition and Dietetics at the American College of Greece. In addition I am the Food and Nutrition Editor for the Greek editions of 'Prevention' Magazine and 'Men's Health' Magazine. I am also a consultant and freelance writer for other Greek and foreign publications.

Qualified professionals in the field of Nutrition and Dietetics in Greece are known as Dietitians or Nutritionists. The terms Dietitian and Nutritionist are used interchangeably in Greece. A qualified dietitian is considered an individual who has completed at least a 4-year Bachelor of Science program in Nutrition or Dietetics. There is one public university in Greece that provides a 4-year degree of nutrition and dietetics. This is known as the Harokopio University, it also provides graduate degrees (Master's and PhD). This program has been in existence for about 10 years. Previously the Harokopio University offered two to three year degrees in nutrition and home economics. In addition there are several other public technological colleges / institutes that offer three to four year dietetics and nutrition degrees, they are not however considered university level, but graduates of these schools are also considered qualified dietitians. Individuals who have completed a Bachelor Degree in another country are also considered qualified if the degree is verified as equivalent to a degree obtained in Greece either from a University or Technical Institute. The credentialing institution that is responsible for verification of university degrees is the Hellenic National Academic Recognition and Information Center, also known as DOATAP. This center verifies the validity and equivalence of the acquired degree with those awarded by Greek institutions of higher education.

In recent years, numerous private schools are offering nutrition degrees that are of questionable value and are not equivalent to a four-year university degree. This poses a problem since there is no official practice license for dietitians in Greece. Fortunately most practicing dietitians hold a Greek degree from the Harokopio University or from a Greek Technological

Institute, and many have postgraduate degrees obtained either from Greece or another country (usually the U.K.). However, many individuals who have not studied nutrition or dietetics use the term dietitian or nutritionist

and open their own offices. In this case individuals from various disciplines provide nutrition information to the public such as medical doctors who do not have nutrition training, physical education instructors, beauticians, etc. Therefore it is very important that a client or patient have information regarding the education of the person providing nutrition information.

The majority of dietitians have their own private practice. They provide professional advice and counseling and nutritional programs for weight loss in adults and children, various diseases, sports nutrition, supplement use and many more. A large number of new graduates are employed in various beauty/spa centers or diet centers. These centers are usually chains and require dietitians.

Other dietitians are involved in research and teaching. Dietitians also work in hospitals and medical centers both in the public and private sector either as clinical dietitians providing their expertise to patients in regards to their diet. But also as foodservice dietitians in which they are responsible and supervise the preparation and service of food served to the patients. In recent years many dietitians are consultants to various food manufacturing companies providing reliable nutrition assessments and writing pamphlets for products. Finally many dietitians provide nutrition advice in community settings such as gymnasiums, schools, and community centers.

Although Greece is the birthplace of the largely popular Mediterranean diet, Greeks have started to shift towards a more Westernized diet. The typical Greek diet is a combination of traditional Mediterranean cuisine, (vegetables cooked with olive oil, legumes, greens, chicken, potatoes, lamb,



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cheese, beef and fish mostly in the summer months), and western cuisine. Due to the change in lifestyle, particularly in larger cities, Greeks have been spending longer hours at work and as a result eat out more often. A recent report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations shows that Greeks, Italians and other Mediterranean nations are consuming more calories and more saturated fat.

Sadly today, a massive 75% of the population in Greece is obese or overweight - an ironic first in the European Union.

Due to this situation dietitians are in high demand to deal not only with the rising obesity rate in adults but also in children.

The Hellenic Dietetic Association (HDA) is the official association and represents dietitians who have completed a four-year university program in Greece or have a foreign degree that has been verified by Greek authorities as equivalent to the Greek University degree. HDA was established in 1969, became a member of EFAD in 1982 and member of ICDA in 1984. Currently the Board of HDA is working closely with the Health Ministry in order to obtain registration status for dietitians. In addition there are efforts to bring together dietitians of all levels of education in order to develop a strong trade organization to advance the profession and to improve the conditions of employment including protection of the title of dietitian, registration, and wages.

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