



# DIETITIAN OR NUTRITIONIST: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

In BC, Registered Dietitians (RDs) are dedicated health professionals with education, training, expertise, and accountability to provide evidence-based nutrition advice.

**RDs** are the only nutrition professionals regulated by law.

**Nutritionists**, Holistic Nutritionists and Certified Nutritionists are not regulated in their training requirements or their practice.

	Registered Dietitian	Holistic Nutritionist	Certified Nutritionist
Titles	In BC, the title 'Registered Dietitian' (RD) is protected and regulated by law.	In BC, the term 'nutritionist' is not protected or regulated by law, so anyone can use it. Commonly used titles include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registered Holistic Nutritionist (RHN)</li> <li>Certified Nutritional Practitioner (CNP)</li> <li>Registered Nutritional Therapist (RNT)</li> <li>Registered Nutritional Consulting Practitioner (RNCP)</li> <li>Natural Nutrition Clinical Practitioner (NNCP).</li> </ul>	
Government Regulation	Accountable to provincial regulatory body (College of Dietitians of BC) for the highest standards of education & ethics, including mandatory annual training. This is important in protecting the public.	No governmental regulation exists or is required for Registered Holistic or Certified Nutritionists.  Terms such as 'certified,' 'registered,' 'specialist' or 'therapist' (and many others) are also not controlled.	
Entry-Level Training & Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University degree (4-5 years)</li> <li>Plus ~1300 hours of supervised practicum in counselling, disease management, population health &amp; food systems</li> <li>Plus completion of the <a href="#">Canadian Dietetic Registration Examination</a></li> </ul> The only program in BC is at the University of British Columbia. Total training >2800 hours.	1 year full time course work (11 instructional months) at a private, vocational school. Total training ~632 hours.	Qualifications vary from post secondary certificates or degrees in nutrition to no formal education or training in the field.
Scope of Practice	Qualified to work in hospitals, medical clinics, long-term care, schools, communities, government offices, food industries, private practice, and other areas.	May work in naturopathic wellness clinics, schools, stores, community agencies.  Can work in private practice but cannot make claims by using words such as prevent, treat, cure, or heal.	

## References

- [csnn.ca/careers/scope-and-code](https://csnn.ca/careers/scope-and-code)
- [snaped.fns.usda.gov/library/materials/national-nutrition-certification-program-nncp](https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/library/materials/national-nutrition-certification-program-nncp)
- [www.closingthegap.ca/dietitian-vs-nutritionist-whats-the-difference](https://www.closingthegap.ca/dietitian-vs-nutritionist-whats-the-difference)
- [www.unlockfood.ca//Articles/About-Dietitians/Is there a difference between dietitian and nutritionist](https://www.unlockfood.ca//Articles/About-Dietitians/Is%20there%20a%20difference%20between%20dietitian%20and%20nutritionist)
- [www.dietitians.ca/About/Learn-About-Dietitians/The-difference-between-a-dietitian-and-nutritionis](https://www.dietitians.ca/About/Learn-About-Dietitians/The-difference-between-a-dietitian-and-nutritionis)

Adapted with permission from  
N. Morcilla, RD 2022