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What is a Certified Clinical Nutritionist?

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"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food."

"We are what we eat."

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away."

The concept is ancient and simple, right? Eat healthy to be healthy. However, the majority of the population understands as much about nutrition as they do rocket science. It is sad, but the Standard American Diet (SAD) continues to be the most popular way of eating, followed by fad diets that are touted as beneficial but create just as much damage. The decisions people make with regard to food is what has led to our obesity and poor health pandemic. But outside of making bad choices are the bad pieces of advice from the internet, family, and even doctors. The information that oftentimes is most readily available about healthy eating is inaccurate, incomplete, and down-right wrong if one looks at our biochemistry. So, even though most may recognize that food influences health, this little bit of knowledge is akin to having a tool you don't know how to use.


Because they are exposed to the most up to date and cutting edge sciences of issues that face humanity and study ways to provide preventative and acute therapies, adding a Certified Clinical Nutritionist (CCN) to a healthcare team could be beneficial for anyone. Most CCNs take a holistic approach, using nutritional medicine, herbology, and even homeopathy, while spending extended amounts of time with patients. This method, and the educational background guiding CCNs, allows them to get to the root of the problem and come up with options.

Per the Clinical Nutrition Certification Board:

"The discipline of Human Clinical Nutrition applies principles derived from current biochemical and physiological scientific knowledge for the purpose of promoting optimal health while recognizing biochemical individuality. The Certified Clinical Nutritionist assesses a person's nutritional needs to achieve normal physiological function. Assessment includes the use of appropriate test and observations such as case history, anthropomorphic measurements, physical signs, laboratory tests, and nutrition/lifestyle analysis to determine an educational nutrition program. Assessment also provides the basis for referral to a licensed physician, or other health care professional. The educational protocol may include, among other information: nutrition / lifestyle modification, nutritive supplementation, understanding of physiological/biochemical pathways, and evoking of regenerative processes."

The International and American Associations of Clinical Nutritionists goes on to give examples of many different illnesses and conditions that CCNs might address:

- Diabetes
- Adrenal Fatigue
- Fibromyalgia
- Degenerative Neurological Diseases
- Autoimmune & Immune Imbalances
- Arthritis & Inflammatory Problems
- Gastrointestinal & Digestive Disturbances
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular Diseases
- Anti-Aging
- Endocrinology
- Epigenomics
- Infectious Disease
- Environmental Toxicity



Having said all of this, the obvious next question is how does one become educated? A CCN is a biochemically based nutrition consultant and educator. Before becoming a CCN, the person must first be a licensed practitioner or hold a masters or doctorate in Human Nutrition Food. Therefore, many CCNs are also pharmacists, chiropractors, physician's assistants, and nurses. Acquiring a CCN accreditation is intensive work, but well worth it. After becoming a CCN, you must complete yearly continuing education to remain certified, from attending biochemically based scientific symposiums and reading a text book designed to enlighten and broaden knowledge on illness/disease states and therapeutic nutritional approaches. CCNs must then pass an examination every 4 years.

Can't I Just Ask My Doctor?

Most people assume their doctors are well educated in nutrition and biochemistry, but this thinking is detrimental. There are some physicians who have taken the time to educate themselves beyond medical school and their available continuing education, but this is not common. Many undereducated physicians attempt to guide patients into "healthy" diets which only begets more illness. This is not a slight against physicians, but simply the truth. Somewhat ironically, there is a doctor who made a video about this exact issue, I invite you to watch what Dr. Michael Greger has amassed:

<https://nutritionfacts.org/video/how-much-do-doctors-actually-know-about-nutrition/>

So if you desire to achieve optimal health, I invite you to take another look at your healthcare team, as many others have, and perhaps you, too, might see the invaluable benefit of including a CCN.

To learn more about the CCN program, please visit the Clinical Nutrition Certification Board at cncb.org.

To learn more about the International and American Associations of Clinical Nutritionists, please visit them at iaacn.org.