

Vegetarian Nutrition Role Statement

Developed by members of the Vegetarian Interest Group

Introduction

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) are recognised professionals with the qualifications and skills to provide expert nutrition and dietary advice. APDs are qualified to advise individuals and groups on nutrition related matters.

APDs have university training accredited by Dietitians Australia, undertake ongoing professional development and commit to evidence-based practice. They comply with the [Dietitians Australia Code of Conduct for Dietitians & Nutritionists](#) and commit to providing quality service.

APD is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. It is a recognised trademark protected by law.

Purpose of this role statement

- To define the role an APD may fulfil when working in the area of vegetarian nutrition
- To promote the knowledge and expertise of an APD, broadly and in the area of vegetarian nutrition and beyond [National Competency Standards](#)
- To advocate for dietetic services

Knowledge and skills in this area of practice

Entry level dietetic competencies ensure all APDs can conduct comprehensive assessments (assessment, diagnosis, intervention, monitoring and evaluation). Within a particular practice area, APD skills and knowledge will range from entry level to highly skilled. Within this continuum APDs can either fully manage the patient, seek support (clinical supervision, secondary consultation, mentor) to continue seeing the patient or choose to refer the patient on.

The following is a list of skills and knowledge required to work in the vegetarian nutrition area:

Knowledge

- Understanding of various reasons which motivate people to choose a vegetarian diet.
- Knowledge of different types of vegetarian dietary patterns which include/exclude animal foods to different extents.
- Knowledge of plant-based foods and their nutritional benefits.
- An understanding of nutritional requirements impacted by vegetarian/plant-based diets during various stages of the lifecycle.
- Knowledge of chronic diseases that are benefited by plant-based foods and vegetarian/plant based dietary patterns.

- Practical meal planning advice and knowledge of wholefoods and proprietary foods commonly promoted to vegetarians.

Skills

- Non-judgemental attitude with respect to an individual's choice to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet.
- Nutritional assessment to screen for and identify limiting nutrients on a plant-based diet.
- Counselling skills to empower or assist clients to adopt nutritionally balanced plant based diets or meat-free meals.
- Practical skills to plan, shop for and prepare plant-based meals and contemporary vegetarian menus.

Activities entry level APDs would conduct

- Provide dietetic consultations for individuals, couples and families following or wishing to adopt, a vegetarian or vegan diet.
- Plan vegetarian and vegan menus for individuals and institutional food services.

Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct

- Provide plant-based food and nutrition consultancy services to corporations, governments and NGO's.
- Provide expert advice and commentary on plant-based foods and dietary patterns to media channels.

Any individual practitioner should refer to the [Scope of Practice Decision Tool](#) to determine if a task is within their scope of practice.

Appendix – Background

A varied and well-balanced vegetarian diet can provide all of the nutrients needed for good health.¹ In fact, plant-based diets may provide health benefits such as reduced chronic disease risk,² and more closely match recommended dietary guidelines to eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, legumes, wholegrains and to limit saturated fats and sugars.³ However a vegetarian diet does not mean just cutting out meat. Careful planning along with knowledge of practical ideas for using a variety of plant foods is needed to ensure nutritional requirements are still met, particularly for the new vegetarian or those with special needs. An Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) with expertise in vegetarian nutrition can provide individual, practical nutrition advice to assist vegetarians enjoy a varied and well-balanced diet.

References

1. Melina V, Craig W, Levin S. Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Vegetarian Diets. *J Acad Nutr Diet* 2016; 116(12): 1970–80.
2. Fraser GE. Vegetarian diets: what do we know of their effects on common chronic diseases? *Am J Clin Nutr* 2009; 89(5): 1607S–1612.

3. Farmer B, Larson BT, Fulgoni VL 3rd, Rainville AJ, Liepa GU. A vegetarian dietary pattern as a nutrient-dense approach to weight management: an analysis of the national health and nutrition examination survey 1999–2004. *J Am Diet Assoc* 2011; 111(6): 819–27.