

Diet & Nutrition - Defining The Difference

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The terms “diet” and “nutrition” are often used interchangeably. However, according to the Taber’s Medical Dictionary, they have distinctly different scientific meanings. Diet is defined as what you eat and drink and Nutrition is the internal processing of foods and beverages, such as ingestion, digestion, absorption, assimilation, distribution, and elimination (i.e., metabolism). This chart provides a brief definition of a few dietary and nutrition research terms for your clarification, as well as providing a brief overview of the scope of practice of a Certified Clinical Nutritionist (C.C.N.), who is trained in human nutrition.

Dietary Research	Nutrition Research
Dietary research classifies calories as a nutrient (“energy”) in a food item. For example, refined, white bread and whole grain bread contain approximately 60-70 calories per slice ¹ and are, therefore, considered dietary equal. ¹ Reference: “ <i>Food Values Of Portions Commonly Used</i> ” by Jean Pennington	Nutrition research classifies foods by their nutrient value. Whole grain bread, for example, is complete in its nutrient value because it contains all of its vitamins, minerals and other nutrients in their original whole food design. Nutrition research has shown that commercialized, food refining and processing techniques deplete nutrient values. Nutrient deficient foods cannot be digested, absorbed, assimilated or eliminated properly. Therefore, they produce putrefied and fermented by-products that interfere with biochemical processes. Whole foods, however, are beneficial for all biochemical processes of the mind and body. Nutrition research classifies calories as a measurement of energy in foods, not nutrients.
Dietary research views the quality of foods in respect to freshness or spoilage, due to parasitic contamination factors (e.g., germs).	Nutrition research views the quality of foods in respect to complete nutrient value content and being void of chemical additives and preservatives. Additives and preservatives cause vitamin and mineral deficiencies and interfere with the “nutrition” of the body.
Dietary research evaluates the quantity of food by standard measurements in ounces, cups, quarts, gallons, etc.	Nutrition research evaluates the quantity of food by ratios of proteins to carbohydrates to fats/oils for a balanced intake of nutrients that must work together synergistically to promote biochemical balance, i.e., homeostasis.
Dietary research focuses on the external effects of environmental pollution of air, food, and water, e.g., sanitation and hygiene.	Nutrition research focuses on the internal effects of environmental pollution of air, food, and water on the biochemistry of the mind and body. For example, ingested pollutants inflame cells and tissue and produce toxic by-products which interfere with the “nutrition” of the body.

Nutrition research led to the establishment of the board Certified Clinical Nutritionists (C.C.N.) in 1983, a little over a decade after the Dietary research led to the establishment of the Registered Dietitian (R.D.). C.C.N.s are trained in human “clinical” nutrition. “Clinical” nutrition refers to macro-nutrient (protein, carbohydrate and fats/oils) and micro-nutrient (vitamins, minerals and water) deficiencies at a cellular and tissue (clinical) level that leads to organ/gland dysfunctions and eventually to disease. The C.C.N. applies biochemical and physiological principles in the assessment of a person’s nutritional needs to achieve normal physiological function and promote health. Assessment includes case history, anthropomorphic measurements, physical signs, laboratory tests and nutrition/lifestyle analysis, which also provides the basis for referral to physician and other health care professionals. The C.C.N. then recommends educational protocols, such as diet, nutrition and lifestyle modification; nutritive supplementation; understanding of biochemical and physiological pathways and the cellular/tissue regenerative processes. The C.C.N. provides assessments, counseling, therapeutic programs and education for individuals and groups. The C.C.N. may choose to work in private practice, or as a staff Clinical Nutritionist or in partnership in a variety of healthcare settings, e.g., hospitals, clinic, wellness/fitness clubs, corporate wellness centers, etc.

For more information and/or to obtain a clinical and sports nutrition analysis of your nutritional biochemistry from a Board Certified Clinical Nutritionist, contact Donna F. Smith, Ph.D., N.D., C.C.N. at:

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