Module 5 – Career Opportunities in Nutrition

In this module, you will explore careers in nutrition that would be suited to students who are particularly skilled and interested in nutrition. Because this module is shorter than are the rest of the modules in this course, there are no level-up or end-of-module quizzes. (Nutrition for Healthy Living 120 **does** have a final exam, however. Don't forget your learning guide yet!)

**Module Objectives:**

On successfully completing this module, you will be able to identify career opportunities and the post-secondary education needed to pursue a career in nutrition.

## Career Options

Nutrition plays an important role in all aspects of health and well-being. You have the opportunity to apply what you have learned in this course towards a rewarding career in food service or food science. With a growing concern for personal health and well-being through healthy eating and an active lifestyle, the field of careers in food and nutrition is growing. There are job opportunities at a variety of skill and education levels. Each of these jobs plays an important role in protecting a person's health (e.g., preparing or serving meals, inspecting food production, or researching the role of nutrients and phytochemicals).

Entry level jobs might be obtained directly from high school. As you gain work experience, there are often opportunities to advance to other levels of employment. These jobs are often found in the food service industry, generally in a commercial or institutional kitchen. Often, students obtain part-time summer employment in entry level jobs and decide they would like to further their education and pursue a career in the field.

Some food-related careers require a license or trade certificate from a community college program. These careers include cooks, chefs, nutrition managers, technicians and others. Training is often coupled with hands-on experience. Many careers in food science and nutrition require a bachelor degree (e.g., a Bachelor of Science). A bachelor degree can be followed by an internship or more advanced studies in a master's or doctoral (PhD) program.

## Categories of Careers

The field of nutrition contains several categories of careers:

* **nutrition and wellness education.**

If you work in this category, you educate others in nutrition and wellness in public schools, universities, community colleges or in private consultant firms (e.g., dietitians, teachers and home economists).

* **food production and distribution.**

If you work in this category, you learn how to raise healthy animals and crops, how to handle food safely and how to store it properly (e.g., farmers, equipment operators, managers, food technicians, food inspectors and quality assurance personnel).

* **food science and technology.**

If you work in this category, you work in bioengineering to develop new products or conduct research (e.g., chemists, food scientists, research dietitians, lab technicians, food testers and recipe developers).

* **nutrition-related health care.**

If you work in this category, you may help people to choose a diet beneficial to their individual health status or work with data to look at trends related to health and nutrition (e.g., clinical dietitians, community health nurses, and epidemiologists).

* **food sales, retailing, advertising and promotion.**

If you work in this category, you promote new products, design food for advertising or design marketing strategies (e.g., cashiers, retail buyers, sales representatives, customer service representatives, merchandise displayers, food writers, accountants, animators, computer technicians and graphic designers).

* **hospitality and food service.**

If you work in this category, you prepare or serve food and beverages for customers (e.g., chefs, cooks, waiters, bartenders and baristas).

* **community nutrition services.**

If you work in this category, you provide education in a home or community setting, not a traditional hospital setting (e.g., community food bank coordinators, home health aides, dietetic technicians and consumer services consultants for sports teams or health clubs). This category represents a field for food and nutrition careers that is growing because of changes in health care, primarily decreases in not only health care budgets but also in delivering health care in hospitals (e.g., dietitians who choose to work in private clinics, in sports nutrition or in the education of school children, pregnant women or the elderly.)

An important distinction comes from the nutrition and wellness education category: the difference between dietitians and nutritionists. As we saw during our discussion of evaluating sources during **Module 3: Health Trends and Resources**, a "nutritionist" might not be a professional at all (A "professional" is educated, certified and regulated in their practice of a profession as is the case with teachers, lawyers, and doctors, for example). The word "nutritionist" is not registered or protected from use. Therefore, anyone may legally call themselves a nutritionist, no matter how much or how little training they have. Registered dietitians are the only professional dietitians in Canada who are legally permitted to use the designation "RD" following their name.

## Education Required

The majority of food and nutrition related programs in post-secondary institutions require similar prerequisites from high school. You need a strong background in science, preferably biology and chemistry and possibly physics, math and English. Computer skills, nutrition courses and food preparation courses will all be helpful as well. Students who enjoy working with people, have a strong background in science, are interested in food and health, and are motivated to work independently are most successful in this field.

In Canada, there are several institutions that offer degree programs relating to nutrition and dietetics. Most offer degree programs in science, applied science or nutrition with options for internship programs. A Bachelor of Science degree is a good basis to start any of the food science and nutrition careers. This first degree will enable you to choose and specialize in an area that is of interest to you as you gain knowledge and experience.

**Now complete and submit –**

* 1. **Discussion Question 1 – Food Guide Comparison**
  2. **Assignment 1 – Perfect Week**