

Vegetarian Nutrition Role Statement

Role Statement for Accredited Practising Dietitians practising in the area of Vegetarian Nutrition

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 sound university training accredited by DAA, undertake ongoing professional development and comply with the DAA guidelines for best practice. They are committed to the DAA Code of Professional Conduct and Statement of Ethical Practice, and 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*
- 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:

Skills:

- The ability to provide dietary advice tailored to the individual needs of the vegetarian/vegan, taking into consideration their belief systems and life-stage.
- Nutritional assessment to screen for and identify potential limiting nutrients on a plant-based diet.
- Counselling skills to empower clients to adopt plant-based diets or meat-free meals.
- Practical skills to shop for and prepare plant-based meals and plan contemporary vegetarian menus.

Knowledge:

- Understanding of various reasons which motivate people to choose to follow a vegetarian diet.
- A good understanding of the different styles of plant-based diets (which may or may not include animal products).
- In-depth knowledge about how plant-based diets differ from omnivorous diets.
- Comprehensive knowledge of the benefits of plant-based foods, especially in regards to micronutrient composition to achieve optimal health status.
- Ability to interpret markers of nutritional status which are important in monitoring micronutrient status in individuals consuming plant-based diets.
- An understanding of nutritional requirements impacted by vegetarian/plant-based diets during various stages of the lifecycle.
- Knowledge of chronic diseases that are impacted 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.
- Ongoing commitment to undertake CPD in areas relating to vegetarian nutrition, plant-based dietary patterns, wholefoods and phytonutrients.

Activities entry level APDs would conduct:

- Provide dietetic consultations for individuals, couples and families.

Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct:

- Provide dietetic consultations for individuals, couples and families.
- Provide dietetic consultations for vegetarian infants and children (as this population may require additional and unique formulas or supplements, and more advanced menu/meal planning skills may be needed for kid-friendly meals using less well known foods).
- Provide plant based food and nutrition consultancy services to corporations, governments and NGO's.
- Plan vegetarian and vegan cycle menus for institutional food services.
- 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.

[Link to entry level competencies](#)

Appendix 1

Background A varied and well-balanced vegetarian diet can provide all of the nutrients needed for good health¹. In fact plant-based diets may provide health benefits such as reduced chronic disease risk², and more closely match recommended dietary guidelines to eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, legumes, wholegrains and to limit saturated fats and sugars³. However a vegetarian diet does not mean just cutting out meat and not paying attention to the rest of the diet. As with any healthy diet, planning along with knowledge of practical ideas for using a variety of plant foods, is needed to ensure nutritional requirements are met, particularly for the new vegetarian or those with special needs⁴. An Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) with expertise in vegetarian nutrition can provide individual, practical nutrition advice to assist vegetarians to enjoy a varied and well-balanced diet.

References:

1. Craig, W.J. and A.R. Mangels, *Position of the American Dietetic Association: vegetarian diets*. J Am Diet Assoc., 2009. **109**(7): p. 1266-82.
2. Fraser, G.E., *Vegetarian diets: what do we know of their effects on common chronic diseases?* Am J Clin Nutr, 2009. **89**(5): p. 1607S-1612.
3. Farmer, B., et al., *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): p. 819-27.
4. Is a vegetarian diet adequate? Supplement to MJA, 2012. <https://www.mja.com.au/open/2012/1/2>