



Ask the Nutritionist

**Sandy Sarni, MS, RD,
MIIA's Integrative Nutrition Coordinator**

Dear Sandy,

I am an active and what I always thought healthy eater 60 year old female. After routine blood work last year I was notified that my A1C level was 6.3 and my iron was very low. I am taking iron supplements per my physician and have tried to make changes in my diet. My question is, when looking for guidance on what to eat, and when to eat, who should I search out, a Dietician or a Nutritionist, and what is the difference? I would like someone in a clinical setting, not a Health Club or home.

The one person that I spoke and met with turned out to be more of a Life/Health Coach and was more concerned with getting my business for supplements and oils.

Thank you for your question.

Thank you for your question, it is a very good one. I'll try to explain and give examples.

The recognized expert in nutrition services is a "Registered Dietitian", (R.D.), the term has been expanded to R.D.N. "Registered Dietitian Nutritionist". The important designation here is "Registered Dietitian". A Registered Dietitian (RD) is a trained nutrition professional who has met the strict educational and experiential standards set forth by the Commission on Dietetic Registration

(CDR) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, has passed a national exam, and maintains registration through continuing professional educational requirements. Many R.D.'s also hold a Master's Degree in Nutrition. Registered dietitians may work in a variety of settings, including (but not limited to) schools, long term care facilities, hospitals, community/public health facilities, corporate nutrition programs, the food and nutrition industry, sports nutrition, business, and research.

In the U.S, the term "nutritionist" is not regulated, no degrees or credentials are required to be a nutritionist. You simply need an interest in the field, however, in over a dozen states, certain qualifications must be met before an individual can call themselves a nutritionist. Additionally, accredited certifications grant titles like Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS). It is no wonder that people are confused!

Nutrition services rendered by a Registered Dietitian are often covered by health insurance, especially when accompanied by a medical diagnosis such as an elevated A1C. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' website, [eatright.org](https://www.eatright.org), offers a listing of Registered Dietitians who do nutrition counseling both in person and via telehealth. Many Registered Dietitians are based within a medical practice. You can find this information at: <https://www.eatright.org/find-a-nutrition-expert>.

I am sorry about your experience with this individual who tried to sell you supplements and oils. I can assure you that a true nutrition professional, such as a R.D., will always recommend "food first" in addressing any health concern. I hope that you have found this information helpful. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me.