

Support Medical Nutrition Therapy

What is medical nutrition therapy?

Medical nutrition therapy refers to specific nutrition procedures including assessment and interventions in the treatment of an illness, injury or disease condition. Medical nutrition therapy procedures define the level, content and frequency of nutrition services that are appropriate for optimal care and nutrition outcomes. There are several components to medical nutrition therapy. Screening may be completed by a registered dietitian (RD), dietetic technician registered (DTR), or other healthcare professional. The RD generally initiates the medical nutrition therapy service. The nutrition care process includes assessment, establishment of client's self-management goals, development of a nutrition plan, documentation, communication with the primary care provider, evaluation and reassessment, and outcomes measurements.

Why is medical nutrition therapy important to HIV infected persons?

Nutrition is a life sustaining treatment. Good nutrition is important in building and maintaining the immune system. Achieving nutritional health and preventing malnutrition are essential in maintaining good health for people living with HIV. The major goals of HIV medical nutrition therapy are:

1. To optimize nutrition status, immunity and overall well being.
2. To prevent specific nutrient deficiencies.
3. To prevent loss of weight and lean body mass.
4. To maximize the effectiveness of medical and pharmacological treatments.
5. To minimize health care costs.

Research shows that medical nutrition therapy saves lives, reduces morbidity, improves health outcomes, and reduces healthcare costs and patients' length of hospital stay. There is growing appreciation toward nutrition as an important component in medical care, however lack of coverage by health care plans is the major barrier to the public's access to medical nutrition therapy. A major breakthrough recently occurred when Congress passed a bill providing Medicare coverage of medical nutrition therapy for diabetes or renal (predialysis) diseases. Congress is now considering an amendment to cover cardiovascular disease.

What can you do to help?

In addition to medical nutrition coverage for cardiovascular disease, coverage for HIV medical nutrition therapy is also critical. Congress must hear from the HIV affected communities for action to occur. Contact your Federal legislators and educate them on why medical nutrition therapy is vital to successful HIV medical care. Tell them to support the amendment to cover cardiovascular disease (HR 2117 / S 960) and that you also want them to introduce a bill that would cover medical nutrition therapy for HIV.

Individualize the form letter below to communicate with your legislators. Find the names and mailing addresses of your legislators at www.congress.org. For more information, see www.hivaidsdpg.org/pp.htm.

Support Medical Nutrition Therapy

Dear Honorable US Senators and Congress Member: _____/_____/_____

I am writing to urge you to cosponsor and provide your support to the Medicare Medical Nutrition Therapy Amendment Act of 2001 (HR 2117 / S 960). This bill would add Medicare beneficiaries with cardiovascular disease as eligible recipients of medical nutrition therapy under Medicare Part B. It is another important step in assuring that nutrition is appropriately addressed early in nutrition-related disease conditions to ultimately avoid disease complications, maintain quality of life and save precious health care dollars.

Coverage for HIV medical nutrition therapy is also vital and I urge you to introduce legislation that would provide coverage for HIV medical nutrition therapy. My personal reason for wanting HIV medical nutrition therapy in outpatient medical settings is:

Thank you for your kind attention and cooperation. The impact of this bill's passage will improve the health outcomes for so many people.

Sincerely,
Name
(signature): _____

Name (printed): _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____