

Did You Know? Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) Play a Crucial Role in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) is a therapeutic approach to treating medical conditions and their associated symptoms via the use of a specifically tailored nutrition care plan designed and monitored by an RDN.

A vital member of the critical care team is the RDN. Outcome and survival are largely dependent on the patient's nutritional status making MNT critical to optimal care.¹

¹ O'Hanlon C, Dowsett J, Smyth N. Nutrition assessment of the intensive care unit patient. *Topics in Clinical Nutrition*. 2015; 30 (1): 47-70. Berger MM, Soquel M, Chamiere B, et al. Impact of the reduction of the recommended energy target in the ICU on protein delivery and clinical outcomes. *Clin Nutr*. 2017; 36 (1): 281-287. Kapourchali FR, Moghadem AM, Moghadem AD, et al. The role of the dietitian in improving energy and protein intake in traumatic brain injury patients admitted to the neurosurgical intensive care unit. *Iran J Neurosurg*. 2019; 5 (3 and 4):2-2.



Many COVID-19 patients are being placed on mechanical ventilators to provide oxygen to the lungs. Traditional feeding is not possible while on a ventilator.

Many COVID-19 patients require ventilator support for up to 20 days. Without proper nutrition and hydration they will be unable to fight the infection and survive.²



Patients on mechanical ventilators have extremely high calorie and protein needs which further increases their risk of malnutrition and therefore, their survival rate.



RDNs

Assess the patient's nutrition status and determine their unique nutrition needs.



Implement a nutrition care plan to meet and maintain the patient's unique nutritional needs through enteral nutrition (tube feeding).



Monitor the patient. Because some patients are situated in the prone (face down) position, the RDN must manage the risk of aspiration and other adverse outcomes.



Evaluate the patient and determine if their nutritional needs are being met. In some cases, they may need to transition to total parenteral nutrition (TPN) to bypass the gut and/or to supplement the enteral feeding.



Transition the patient off of tube feeding and specialized nutrition support therapy to oral diet.



For more information and to find a qualified RDN, visit eatrightmich.org

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² Tai D, Lew T, Loo S, et al. Critically ill patients with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in a designated national SARS ICU: clinical features and predictors for mortality. *Crit Care*. 2004; 8(suppl 1): p 38.