

The Role of a Dietician in Perinatal Mental Health

Scope of Practice

The role of a dietician is to educate the patient on their own nutrition, change nutritional intake to meet individualized dietary needs, and promote a healthy lifestyle using evidence-based practice and application of nutrition (American Nutrition Association, n.d.; Lee et al., 2017).

Nutritionists Address:

- Caloric Intake
- Vitamin Deficiency
- Educate on a well-balanced diet
- Weight Management
- Energy requirements for pregnancy
- Food safety
- Management of gestational diabetes

(American Nutrition Association, n.d.; Lee et al., 2017)

Conditions for Referral

- Weight management challenges, losing a significant amount of weight or gaining a significant amount of weight
- Hemoglobin Level Concerns
- Hypertension
- Gastrointestinal discomfort
- Education for vitamin-mineral supplementation
- Substance abuse
- Bed rest
- Twin pregnancy

- Gestational Diabetes
- Pre-existing Conditions:
- Diabetes Mellitus
 - Chronic Renal Failure
 - Eating Disorders

(Institute of Medicine Committee on Nutritional Status During Pregnancy and Lactation, 1992; Lee, 2017)

Nutritionist Role in the Perinatal Population

Food and Mood Connection	
Promote Mental Health and Well-Being Postpartum	Linked to Decreased Mental Health
<p>A balanced diet with supplementation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vitamin D ■ Iron ■ Tryptophan or tyrosine ■ Magnesium <p>A diet consisting of fiber-rich foods</p> <p>(Amini et al., 2022; Cowen & Browning, 2015; Dowlati et al., 2017; Yano et al., 2015; Yelverton et al., 2022).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High consumption levels of food low in nutrient density. ■ Macronutrient and micronutrient deficiencies postpartum. <p>(Opie et al., 2020; Wan Mohamed Radzi et al., 2021)</p>

Studies Suggesting Food and Mood Connection in Postpartum Women

Balanced Diet and Postpartum Mood

- A balanced diet and supplementation of vitamin D, iron, tryptophan, or tyrosine has been shown to decrease symptoms of postpartum depression and can improve overall mood (Amini et al., 2022; Dowlati et al., 2017; Yelverton et al., 2022).
- Women with severe depression had a high consumption of unhealthy foods (Wan Mohamed Radzi et al., 2021).
- Depression disorder may be associated with macro and micronutrient deficiencies (Opie et al., 2020).

- The current evidence showed that an adequate diet and selected nutrient supplements, notably vitamin D, iron, tryptophan or tyrosine' may promote resiliency against depressed mood in the early postpartum period (Amini et al., 2022; Dowlati et al., 2017).

Fiber-Rich Diet and Postpartum Mood

- Adhering to a Mediterranean diet consisting of an increased amounts of fiber-rich foods reduces mental illness and reduction of inflammation. The gut microbiota is responsible for producing 90% of the body's serotonin. Depression is often associated with depleted serotonin levels (Cowen & Browning, 2015; Yano et al., 2015).
- The current study, alongside previous observational studies, noted specifically that nutrients found in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables were associated with improved mental health. This study's findings suggest that the high content of fiber in such foods is the root of the observed benefits in a pregnant cohort (Yelverton et al., 2015).
- In addition to fiber, some micronutrients, including magnesium, may play a role in promoting positive well-being (Yelverton et al., 2015).
- Numerous health benefits of high fiber intake have been reported, including lower incidence of anxiety, increased happiness and life satisfaction, improved microbiome health leading to psychological well-being, and improved cognitive development of offspring.

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