



Achieving Adherence to Your Nutritional Recommendations

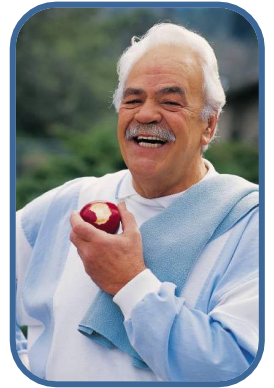
A study recently published in *Circulation* shows that Americans can be particularly non-compliant with dietary instructions.¹ Even after acute coronary syndrome, North Americans followed dietary instructions for 30 days 47% of the time, according to self-reporting. This contrasts starkly with Indian patients who followed dietary instructions 88% of the time and South Americans who reported adherence 83% of the time. In this study, adherence to lifestyle instructions showed a strong effect on morbidity and mortality. The authors conclude that the data justifies a significant investment in programs that systematically enhance lifestyle modification.

Doctors commonly prescribe dietary modifications as part of chronic disease management strategies. In the absence of a recent acute episode to motivate patients, adherence can be quite low. Authors have posed the question, "Is there a benefit in physicians providing nutrition recommendations when compliance is so problematic?" The necessary complexity of therapeutic diets often hinders patient adherence. Neal Patel, MD writes that, because direct outpatient-physician contact is limited, patients often feel isolated in their efforts to modify behavior.²

Research has long established methods for improving patient adherence to nutritional recommendations, and Baystate Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice makes these methods easily available to your practice. Multiple studies have found that medium to high intensity dietary counseling for patients can produce medium to large changes in patient-managed diets.²⁻⁷ Research also suggests that a substantial component of some chronic disorders is beyond the reach of pharmacotherapy and will only improve if the patient improves his or her diet as per medical recommendations.^{1,5}

The studies showing the most successful nutritional interventions typically involve multiple training and counseling sessions spread over weeks or months. While the primary care medical model is sometimes not conducive to medium to high intensity dietary counseling as described in these studies, the home health model fits well the needs of geriatric patients attempting to learn and maintain a new therapeutic diet.

With one simple referral to Baystate Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice, you can have experienced home health nurses making multiple visits to the homes of your homebound patients for teaching on disease related therapeutic diets. Our nurses often provide teaching sheets and visual aids to promote understanding and retention of the information. With the home care patient, our nurses can look through the pantry and refrigerator with them, review nutrition labels, and make specific recommendations. Such reviews are especially beneficial for identifying misunderstandings. In the home environment, we can also identify family helpers participating in grocery shopping and include them in the training. Repeated visits facilitate nutrition evaluation, patient understanding, patient retention, and nurse verification of effective adherence.



Consider a referral to Baystate Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice for diet teaching any time you make nutritional recommendations for conditions such as:

- **Diabetes** - to normalize blood sugar and for weight management
- **COPD** - diet to decrease carbon dioxide production, ensure hydration, and weight maintenance
- **Cardiovascular Disease** - to minimize sodium intake and fluid retention, or to promote LDL cholesterol reduction
- **Cancer** - creative feeding strategies to encourage adequate nutrient intake
- **Gastrointestinal Disorders** - to promote bowel regularity, minimize discomfort and identify food intolerances
- **Dementia** - to eliminate negative effects of dementia including prevention of weight loss and dehydration
- **Liver Disease** - education to promote compliance with dietary prescription
- **Hypertension** - reduce blood pressure and reduce risk of cardiovascular disease by encouraging a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, dairy, and low sodium alternatives
- **Critical Illness** - for enteral and parenteral support

**Please consider Baystate Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice for your patients.
To make a referral call: 800-249-8298.**

References

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