

Can Personal Trainers Give Nutrition Advice?

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Health and fitness pros know that to help a client transform their body, you must address movement, lifestyle, and nutrition. They know that without proper nutrition, clients will struggle to meet their health goals. The catch? Unless you are a Registered Dietitian (RD), your ability to provide recommendations are legally limited. Consider these questions:

1. Many personal trainers seem to provide nutritional advice or at least nutritional counseling to their clients as part of their fitness services. Is this legal?

Maybe! Nearly all states in the U.S. have laws regulating services by dietitians, nutritionists or professionals with similar titles. These professions typically require licensure, certification, or required registration. In many states dietetic services can only be provided by qualified professionals who meet specific state regulatory requirements. In some cases, providing nutritional or dietetic counseling without the appropriate credential is criminal and exposes the offending party to fine or imprisonment, as well as legal action to prevent further violations of law.

2. Can personal trainers advise clients on what to eat to maintain a healthy lifestyle, as opposed to providing medically based nutritional advice?

This largely depends on the state law in effect where services are provided to clients. In Ohio, for example, the Ohio Board of Dietetics issued a comprehensive guideline on the subject. In short, it is okay to provide general non-medical nutritional information defined in the Guideline as information on:

- Principles of good nutrition and food preparation;
- Food to be included in the normal daily diet;
- The essential nutrients needed by the body;
- Recommended amounts of the essential nutrients;
- The action of nutrients on the body;
- The effects of deficiencies or excesses of nutrients;
- Food and supplements that are good sources of essential nutrients

3. How should fitness professionals proceed if they want to provide advice to clients on diet and nutrition?

Fitness professionals need to understand that the law differs from state to state. Reach out to your professional association or state regulatory board to review specific state regulations. Do this *before* starting services. Stay away from medical-type nutritional advice. Instead, offer educational guidance on good nutrition and diet. **Last, check with your insurance carrier to and make sure you have proper professional liability coverage for your fitness services.**

Reference:

<https://www.cphins.com/nutritional-advice-by-personal-trainers-is-it-legal/>