

# Medical Nutrition Therapy Act of 2020

## About Us

The **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics**, the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals, represents more than 107,000 credentialed practitioners – registered dietitian nutritionists, nutrition and dietetic technicians, registered, and advanced-degree nutritionists, many of whom treat the Medicare population.

## The Cost of Chronic Conditions

According to the CDC, 90% of the nation's \$3.5 trillion annual health care expenditures is spent on treating chronic and mental health conditions.<sup>1</sup> Care for individuals with multiple chronic conditions is especially costly in the Medicare population (see figure).<sup>2</sup>

Many diet-related chronic conditions are contributing to poor COVID-19 outcomes. Minority populations have long faced chronic disease health disparities due to socioeconomic inequalities and reduced access to health care, healthy foods and safe places to be active. It is these same groups that are now disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

## Barriers to Care for Seniors

Currently, Medicare Part B only covers outpatient MNT for diabetes, renal disease and post-kidney transplant.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, qualified providers such as nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, clinical nurse specialists and psychologists are barred from directly referring their patients to MNT services.

## MNT is an Effective Solution

**MNT has been shown to be a cost-effective component of treatment for obesity, diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, HIV infection, unintended weight loss in older adults and other chronic conditions.**<sup>4,5,6</sup> Counseling provided by an RDN as part of a health care team can positively impact weight, blood pressure, blood lipids and blood sugar control.<sup>7,8</sup> In a national survey of primary care physicians, respondents reported believing that **RDNs were the most qualified health care providers** to assist patients with weight loss.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the National Lipid Association **recommends nutritional counseling by RDNs** to promote long-term adherence to an individualized, heart-healthy diet.<sup>10</sup>

## What the MNT Act of 2020 Does

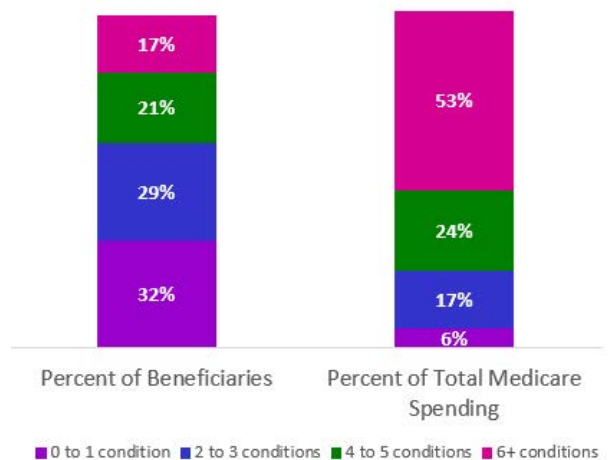
This bill amends the Social Security Act to provide Medicare Part B coverage of outpatient MNT for **prediabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, malnutrition, eating disorders, cancer, celiac disease, HIV/AIDS** and any other disease or condition causing **unintentional weight loss**, with authority granted to the Secretary of Health to include other diseases based on medical necessity. It also authorizes nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, clinical nurse specialists and psychologists to **refer patients for MNT**.

## Co-sponsor the MNT Act of 2020

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics urges members of Congress to co-sponsor and support passage of the Medical Nutrition Therapy Act of 2020. The bill was introduced in the 116th Congress by Representative Eliot Engel (NY-16).

**For more information or to become a co-sponsor, please contact Sahil Chaudhary in Representative Engel's office: S.Chaudhary@mail.house.gov.**

Medicare FFS Beneficiaries by Number of Chronic Conditions and Total Medicare Spending, 2017<sup>2</sup>



- <sup>1</sup>Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Chronic Conditions Charts 2017. [https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Chronic-Conditions/Chartbook\\_Charts](https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Chronic-Conditions/Chartbook_Charts). Accessed March 29, 2020.
- <sup>2</sup>Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Chronic Conditions among Medicare Beneficiaries, Chartbook, 2012 Edition. Baltimore, MD. 2012. Available at <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Chronic-Conditions/Downloads/2012Chartbook.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup>Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. March 2020. Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT). Available at: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Prevention/PrevntionGenInfo/medicare-preventive-services/MPS-QuickReferenceChart-1.html#MNT>. Accessed March 30, 2020.
- <sup>4</sup>Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. What is the evidence to support the cost-effectiveness, cost benefit or economic savings of outpatient MNT services provided by an RD? (Evidence Analysis Library website) (Reviewed 2009. Accessed 2020.) <https://www.andeal.org/topic.cfm?cat=4085>
- <sup>5</sup>Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Evidence Analysis Library. Medical Nutrition Therapy Effectiveness Systematic Review 2009, 2013-2015. <http://www.andeal.org/mnt>. Accessed March 30, 2020.
- <sup>6</sup>Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. MNT: Weight Management. <https://www.andeal.org/topic.cfm?menu=5284&cat=5230>. 2015. Accessed March 30, 2020.
- <sup>7</sup>Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. What is the evidence to support effectiveness of nutrition interventions and counseling provided by an RD when part of a healthcare team? (Evidence Analysis Library website) (Reviewed 2009. Accessed 2020.) <https://www.andeal.org/topic.cfm?menu=4085&cat=3676>
- <sup>8</sup>Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. MNT: RDN in Medical Team. <https://www.andeal.org/topic.cfm?menu=5284&cat=5233>. 2015. Accessed March 30, 2020.
- <sup>9</sup>Bleich SN, Bennett WL, Gudzone KA, Cooper LA. National survey of US primary care physicians' perspectives about causes of obesity and solutions to improve care. *4MJ Open* 2012;2:e001871. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2012-001871.
- <sup>10</sup>Jacobson TA, Maki, KC, Orringer, CE, et al. National Lipid Association Recommendations for Patient-Centered Management of Dyslipidemia: Part 2. *J of Clin Lipid* (2015) 9: S1-S122.