



Outpatient Nutrition Counseling for Adolescents

Outpatient nutrition counseling helps your adolescent to plan a treatment that fits their unique needs. We work towards long-term changes in eating behaviors.

Clinical dietitians who work with adolescents have special training and expertise in helping people form a positive relationship with food. We focus on teaching adolescents about metabolism and meal patterns, and help our patients learn to trust and nourish their bodies. We also focus on how families communicate with each other and model eating practices, because it can make a difference in how an adolescent eats. Weight issues can be complex, so your adolescent will have a team of healthcare providers. This team will work with your family on a treatment plan that fits your adolescent's unique needs. We work towards long-term changes in eating behaviors. This process can take time, and your ongoing support is important.

What can we expect at visits?

Our goal is to build trust and to learn about what life is like for your adolescent and your family. This will help us learn how people in your family make decisions about food and nutrition.

We typically spend part of the visit alone with your adolescent. We focus on what they are doing well and supporting their efforts. At the first few visits, we mainly teach concepts and make suggestions for small changes. This lets your adolescent apply what they have learned to their own lives.

Often, patients who come to our clinic already know a lot about food and nutrition but struggle with how to apply it to their own lives. We will teach your adolescent and you about topics like:

- Metabolism and how food works in the body
- Energy and food needs for growth and development
- Activity needs
- Effects of irregular eating patterns
- Recognizing cues for hunger and for feeling satisfied
- Recognizing different kinds of hunger
- Body composition
- Body image

How can I support my adolescent at home?

During visits, we often offer tools and handouts for your adolescent to use at home. These help them remember and apply concepts they learn in clinic.

We do not usually ask our patients to track their food intake or create food records. This may add stress. In general, we do not provide meal plans; rather, we discuss eating patterns and together may develop some meal and snack ideas. We may make a structured meal plan over time if it seems to be a useful tool for your adolescent. Our long-term goals are to promote eating a variety of foods and building balanced eating patterns.

My adolescent's clinical dietitian (nutritionist) is:

To schedule an appointment with my adolescent's dietitian:

Call 206-987-2028

To Learn More

- Adolescent Medicine
206-987-2028
- For an appointment,
call 206-987-2028
- Ask your child's
healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask
your child's nurse.
- From outside the
hospital, call the
toll-free Family
Interpreting Line
1-866-583-1527. Tell
the interpreter the
name or extension
you need.

We may also partner with you and your teen to create family-centered goals. For example, eating together or as a family is often very supportive. While we each have individual needs, by eating a variety of foods and a balanced eating pattern yourself, you can be a very positive role model for your teen.

How are families involved in nutrition care?

Families are a key to their adolescent's success in treatment. You know your adolescent best, and we value your unique history with them. Most of the time, we bring parents into the last part of the visit. This gives us time to go over topics covered in the session and review any recommendations. This review is an important part of your adolescent's learning. Also, you are always welcome to ask any questions you may have about treatment.

How will my adolescent's care team communicate?

A collaborative care team is vital to the treatment of patients with complex nutrition-related issues. We work closely and communicate often with other providers on your adolescent's healthcare team. Team members typically include an adolescent medicine provider, adolescent dietitian, therapist or counselor, social worker, and primary care physician.

How long will my adolescent come to clinic?

Once your adolescent's treatment team is in place, it often takes 5 to 8 visits to start long-term behavior change. After that, we will assess your adolescent's needs and make recommendations for further visits. The total number of visits they need depends upon how your adolescent is doing with the struggles and successes in eating.

The initial visit plan we recommend for your adolescent is often:

- Every other week for 2 months
- Every 3 to 4 weeks for 3 to 6 months
- Monthly or every two months for 4 to 6 months

When we are able to meet with your adolescent on a regular basis, and as part of a complete treatment team, we will best be able to support your adolescent in making positive changes. Typically, we see them less often as time goes on, providing greater lengths of time between visits to be practicing developmentally appropriate skills in their day-to-day life.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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