

Does Your Dietitian Understand Your Background and Beliefs?

“Cultural sensitivity” plays an important part in the delivery of nutrition and food services. People’s personal beliefs – as well as age, religion, race, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status and more – play a role in how food and nutrition are used to achieve and maintain optimal health. Think about this:

- How do you want to be treated?
- Who do you want to be involved in your nutrition services?
- What decisions make sense for you?
- What are your fears and anxieties?

“Always be clear about what’s important to you when you speak with your Registered Dietitian, so that they can do their best to help with your nutrition needs,” says Mary Lou Gignac, *Registrar & Executive Director* of the College of Dietitians of Ontario (www.mydietitian.ca). Registered Dietitians are trained to consider how culture, traditions, values, beliefs, family and personal lifestyles all affect nutrition health.

“Registered Dietitians are accountable to not only provide quality dietetic services, but to do it in a way that’s respectful,” says Mary Lou Gignac. “Sharing your needs and experiences with your dietitian, will help them respond in the most appropriate and effective way.

While research demonstrates that nutrition has a significant impact on health, it is also true that background and circumstances can shape how people view their health, and what they want and require from their dietitian.

All of this matters. Make sure that your dietitian is aware of your viewpoints and understands you, so that you can work together to meet your health goals.

When you receive services from a dietitian, you can expect respectful and collaborative care. The College of Dietitians of Ontario monitors dietitians through a profession-wide Quality Assurance Program for the delivery of safe, ethical and competent client-centred services.