



NATIONAL BOARD OF
PHYSICIAN NUTRITION
SPECIALISTS

Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists®

Candidate Handbook 2026

More Information:
NBPNS@nutrition.org
www.nbpns.org

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Welcome, and thank you for your interest in the NBPNS Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists®.

This handbook provides important information to help you prepare for and complete the certification process. All individuals applying for and taking the examination are expected to read this handbook carefully.

Please note that this handbook will be updated periodically. For the most current version, visit <https://nbpns.org>.

Certification

The National Board of Physician Nutrition Specialists (NBPNS) supports voluntary, periodic certification for physicians seeking recognition as nutrition specialists. Board certification in medical nutrition is highly valued and provides formal recognition of a physician's knowledge and practice in nutrition care.

Certification as a Physician Nutrition Specialist® formally recognizes physicians by:

1. **Recognizing qualified individuals** who meet the eligibility requirements established by the National Board of Physician Nutrition Specialists (NBPNS) and successfully pass the Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists®.
2. **Encouraging ongoing professional development** and continued growth in the practice of medical nutrition.
3. **Defining and assessing the knowledge base** required for certification as a Physician Nutrition Specialist®.
4. **Establishing a standard of knowledge** that supports employers, the public, and other health professionals in evaluating the qualifications of physician nutrition specialists.

The NBPNS credential does not fulfill or replace any requirements for medical licensure in the United States.

Definition of a Physician Nutrition Specialist®

A Physician Nutrition Specialist® (PNS) is a physician with advanced training in nutrition who devotes a substantial portion of their professional effort to nutrition care, education, and leadership. PNS are qualified to assume leadership roles in coordinating interprofessional clinical nutrition services and educational initiatives across a variety of health care settings, including academic health centers, medical centers, and private practice.

Physician Nutrition Specialists typically have backgrounds in internal medicine, pediatrics, family medicine, or general surgery, and may also come from subspecialties such as adult or pediatric gastroenterology, endocrinology, critical care, nephrology, cardiology, and related fields.

PNS have completed defined nutrition training that includes mastery of core nutrition knowledge and mentored clinical nutrition experience. This training may be obtained through a dedicated nutrition fellowship or as part of training in another medical subspecialty.

All Physician Nutrition Specialists have met the requirements established by the National Board of Physician Nutrition Specialists and hold active certification through NBPNS.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to take the Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists®, candidates must meet **all** of the following requirements:

1. Medical Licensure and Board Certification

- a) Hold a current license to practice medicine in the United States, or equivalent licensure in another country. Candidates must be licensed to practice medicine in the country in which they reside.
- b) Has an active board certification from a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the equivalent certifying body in osteopathic medicine, or an equivalent physician specialty certification in another country.

2. Demonstrated Expertise in Nutrition

Meet **two or more** of the following criteria:

- ☐ Mentored training in clinical nutrition
(Letter of recommendation from mentor required)
- ☐ Service on a dedicated hospital support nutrition team
(Letter from hospital chief of staff or physician department head required)
- ☐ Nutrition research with peer-reviewed publications
(Documented on curriculum vitae)
- ☐ Teaching or clinical practice integration in nutrition, demonstrated by **one** of the following:
 - Teaching position involving nutrition at an academic medical center
(Letter from department chair required), **or**
 - Personal statement describing integration of nutrition into clinical practice **and** a letter of support from an NBPNS Diplomate
- ☐ Committee membership and/or leadership role in a national nutrition society
(Documented on curriculum vitae)
- ☐ Completion of at least 75 hours of continuing medical education (CME) in clinical nutrition
(CME documentation required)
- ☐ Peer-recognized regional leadership role in nutrition
(Letter of recommendation from a professional peer required)

3. Application Submission

Submit a completed Application for the Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists®, including copies of a current medical license and board certification.

4. Examination Fee

Submit payment of the required examination fee.

Final eligibility is subject to review and approval by the NBPNS Board.

Eligibility requirements have been adapted due to the limited availability of formal clinical nutrition training positions. Requirements are reviewed annually and may be updated as training opportunities expand.

Testing Schedule

The Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists® is now offered on a rolling basis, providing greater flexibility for candidates. Applicants may submit an application and sit for the examination at any time during the year.

This updated approach replaces the former twice-yearly testing periods.

Application Process

Step 1: Complete Application

- Access the NBPNS Prolydian landing page at:
<https://app.prolydian.com/organizations/nbpns>
- Before starting a new application, you will be prompted to create a user account and password. Save this information for future reference.
- Review all eligibility information provided on the landing page.
- At the bottom of the landing page, select "Applications" in the dropdown menu options and then click on the "Apply now" button for the "NBPNS - Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists Initial Application."
- Complete the online application and upload all required supporting documentation.
- Enter your first and last name exactly as it appears on your current driver's license, passport, state-issued non-driver ID, or military ID.
- Applications are not considered complete until all required information, documentation, and payment have been submitted.

Step 2: Submit Exam Fee and Application for Review

- You will receive an email that confirms receipt of your payment and application. Please allow up to 10 business days for application review.

Step 3: Receive Application Status Update

- After your application has been reviewed, NBPNS will notify you of your application status by email. Your application may be:

Approved

- You will receive a scheduling authorization email with instructions for scheduling your examination.

Reopened for Additional Documentation

- Additional information or documentation is required before your application can be approved.

Rejected

- This means you are not eligible to take the examination. The reason for the decision will be explained in the notification email.
- Rejected applications will be refunded minus a \$50 administrative fee.
- Applicants whose applications are rejected may reapply once eligibility requirements are met and a new application, documentation, and fee are submitted.

Scheduling Your Examination

The NBPNS exam is a computer-based exam administered through **Prolydian** and remotely proctored by **MonitorEDU**.

When you complete your application, an account will be created for you in Prolydian. You should receive an email from support@prolydian.com with instructions for completing your account setup.

If you did not receive the email:

1. Go to <https://app.prolydian.com>
2. Click **“Forgot my password”**
3. Ensure that support@prolydian.com is listed as an allowed sender with your email provider

If you have not yet done so, the Prolydian system will prompt you to update your account information including your name and address. It is critical that your name matches the name displayed on your identification exactly.

After updating your account information, you can proceed with the scheduling process.

Once logged into your Prolydian account, access your **Exams Dashboard** and click the **“Schedule”** button to select your exam date and time.

Important: Once your application has been accepted you have 180 days to take the examination.

After scheduling, Prolydian will send you a confirmation email that includes your test date, testing time, and instructions for preparing for your proctored examination.

Need Assistance?

- If you experience issues scheduling your exam, or
- If you need to update your Prolydian profile name to match your government-issued photo ID, please contact support+NBPNS@prolydian.com.

Remote Proctoring Information

To learn more about scheduling your exam or the remote proctoring experience, visit the [Prolydian Test Taker FAQs](#).

Please note that **MonitorEDU requires both a laptop and a mobile phone** during your exam appointment. Be sure to prepare accordingly.

For more information on MonitorEDU, review the following resources:

- [Starting Your Exam – MonitorEDU](#)
- [MonitorEDU FAQs](#)

Exam Format

The exam is comprised of one four-hour block to answer 240 single-best-answer multiple choice questions. Within the four-hour block, one 10-minute break may be taken that may be used at the candidate's discretion. On the exam platform, you will see a Coffee Cup icon. Click on this icon and then notify your proctor (verbally or by Google Meet chat) before starting your break.

Refund Policy

NBPNS does not offer full refunds once an applicant submits payment. For rejected applications and others requiring a refund, a \$50 fee will be assessed.

Cancellation Policy

You may cancel your exam up to twenty-four (24) hours in advance of your existing appointment. If you cancel your appointment, you must reschedule within your 180-day testing period. You will not be able to cancel your appointment within twenty-four (24) hours of your existing appointment.

If you fail to cancel your appointment and do not appear for your test, you will be required to pay a \$200 exam retesting fee if you choose to reschedule the examination. NOTE: NBPNS may allow exceptions for medical and other emergencies.

Reschedule Policy

You may reschedule your exam to a different date and/or time up to twenty-four hours in advance of your existing appointment with no penalty. Reschedule online by logging into your account. If you reschedule, you will be restricted to do so within your original 180-day eligibility period.

No-Show Policy

Once your examination is scheduled, you will be permitted to make changes to the appointment without penalty up to twenty-four (24) hours prior to your appointment. If you do not provide twenty-four (24) hours' notice of cancellation or do not appear for the appointment, you will be considered a No Show. Further, if you arrive more than 15 minutes late, fail to present adequate identification, or refuse to sign the nondisclosure agreement, you will not be allowed to take the examination and will be considered a No-Show and forfeit the examination fee. If you are considered a No Show and choose to reschedule the test, a \$200 retest fee will be assessed. You must reschedule the test within the 180-day testing period.

Retest Policy

If you fail the examination, you may retake the examination following 14 days. You will be charged a \$200 retesting fee. You must retake the examination within the 180-day testing period, otherwise a new application and fee will be assessed.

Examination Technical Requirements

For video instructions and an overview of technical requirements, visit [MonitorEDU FAQs](#).

In summary:

- The Google Meet application is required for testing. Download here: [Google Play \(Android\)](#), [App Store \(Apple\)](#)
- Google Chrome is required to be installed on your computer
- Operating System: macOS X 10.13 or higher, Windows 10 or higher.
- Phone Operating System: Android OS 6.0 or higher and iOS (Apple) 12.0 mobile phone with a functioning camera
- Web Camera: Minimum- 640×480 resolution, Recommended- 1280×720 resolution
- Internet Download Speed: A required upload and download speed of 2Mbps, with 10Mbps preferred
- RAM: Minimum – 2GB, Recommended- 4GB
- A Functioning Microphone: Webcams with built in microphones and stand-alone microphones supported. Both mobile phone and laptop/computer need to have a functioning microphone.
- Power Supply: Your devices must be connected to a power source throughout your exam. Ensure that you will have a phone cord (recommended 6-foot long extension cord is sufficient) so that your phone may be propped in a six-foot radius from your testing space.

- Not Supported:
 - Tablets are not recommended (iPad, Galaxy Tab, Galaxy Note, etc.)
 - ARM CPU Architecture
 - Dual Monitors are NOT supported

Testing Environment Requirements

- A suitable environment is a room that is enclosed, such as an office, a bedroom, or any other room with four walls that contains a door or other barrier to prevent entry. A bathroom is not a permitted testing location. Windows are allowed, however, they need to be closed and covered. A candidate can close blinds and shades, or cover the window with a sheet, towel, or other material.
- The room must be free of clutter and contain no accessible devices, books, notes, or other materials that could potentially allow a candidate to cheat.
- Dual monitors are NOT supported. If you have a second monitor, it must be removed from your testing environment or covered.
- The desk or workspace the individual uses must be free of any devices, books, notes, or other materials that could potentially allow a candidate to cheat.
- Headphones are not permitted for use during your exam appointment.
- Examinees are allowed a CLEAR glass or bottle of water only.
- In general, the goal is to have as sterile an environment as possible.

If you are disconnected from your proctor, your proctor will lock your exam. Please try to refresh and rejoin the Google Meet meeting. If you experience connection issues lasting longer than 5 minutes use MonitorEDU's chat

support: <https://tawk.to/chat/5b2a5c47eba8cd3125e3057c/default>

All non-technical inquiries should be directed to the National Board of Physicians Nutrition Specialists at nbpns@nutrition.org.

Prior to Your Examination

Before your exam, review the following [MonitorEDU requirements](#) and ensure that the Google Meet application has been downloaded to your phone. Below are instructions, and for more information about MonitorEDU, visit their [FAQ page](#).

Set Up Your Mobile Phone

1. Download the Google Meet application to your phone [Google Play \(Android\)](#), [App Store \(Apple\)](#)
2. Open the Google Meet application

3. Click "New Meeting"
4. Click "Create Link" to start an instant meeting
5. Make sure that you can see yourself on your camera. If you can, you're set to move on to the next instructions.

Set Up Your Webcam

1. Using your laptop device, in Google Chrome, open a new browser page
2. Go to monitoredu.live/practice
3. Once on the page, click "submit" to launch the video page, then click "Start video chat"
4. Make sure you can see yourself in your camera. If you can, you can move on to the next steps. If not, you may need to check your system settings to allow use of your webcam.

Test Your Internet

1. To test your internet connection, go to speedtest.net
2. Ensure that your internet speed is at minimum 2MBPS, with 10Mbps preferred

Practice Setting Up Your Mobile Phone

Familiarize yourself with the appropriate placement of your mobile phone for proctoring ahead of your appointment to save time on exam day. Watch the following video which explains the proctoring process and the appropriate placement of your mobile phone, along with how to set up your room.

- [Setting Up Your Room for a Proctored Test \(video\)](#)

Your mobile phone must remain plugged in for the duration of the exam, so make sure you can set it up in a location where this is possible.

Prepare Identity Verification Documents

During check-in, you will need a valid, unexpired ID. This includes one of the following:

- Government-issued driver's license
- College/University-issued staff photo ID
- Passport
- Non-US Military issued identification card
- Any Physical Government-Issued Identification Card (must include photo)

On the Day of Your Examination

Log in 10 minutes prior to the exam. You may want to refresh the screen at the time of the exam. To access your exam:

1. Make sure that the Google Meet application has been downloaded to your phone. [Google Play \(Android\)](#), [App Store \(Apple\)](#)
2. Ensure that your testing space aligns with the "Testing Room Requirements" section below.
3. Log into your Prolydian account.
4. Go to the "My exams" dashboard and click the "Launch Exam" button (This button will be enabled one minute before your exam time.)
5. You will be directed to the MonitorEDU chat interface. Verify your name and email address are correct, enter your phone number, and select your organization from the listing.
6. Click "Start Chat"
7. A MonitorEDU representative will connect with you through the chat and send you a Google Meet link that you will use to open a meeting on your phone.
8. Your proctor will start their security check after you have joined the video meeting on your phone. You will be asked to use the camera on your mobile phone to show your work area, your computer, the area behind your computer, and your testing space.
9. Your proctor will check your ID to verify that it matches your account information
10. After the security check, your proctor will ask you to place your mobile phone to the side of you. Your phone will need to be propped up so that you are visible.
11. Once the above steps are complete, your proctor will guide you in unlocking your exam.

Exam Proctoring Rules

Talking aloud: Unless you have an accommodation, talking or whispering aloud during the exam is not permitted.

Being out of camera view: Your face, chin to forehead, needs to be in the camera view at all times.

Anyone entering your testing area: You may not have anyone else in your testing location with you.

Anyone talking to you while you're in your testing area: Additional noises, including other people talking to you while you're in your exam are not allowed.

Looking off-screen: Your eyes should stay on the screen at all times while testing.

Leaving the test space: With the exception of the one, allowable 10-minute break, candidates are not allowed to leave the test space.

Taking pictures or screenshots of the exam: Taking pictures while in your exam, including screenshots, is not permitted. If you're using a Mac and have a live human proctored launch, your proctor will turn off the ability to use your keyboard screenshot hotkeys.

Copying and pasting any elements of the exam: In most cases, the system will not allow you to copy and paste any content from your exam. Regardless of whether you can or cannot perform this function, our system will capture all events of copy and paste that occur.

Special Accommodations

NBPNS provides reasonable testing accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for qualified candidates with documented disabilities. Requests must be submitted during the application process. If you have questions, please contact NBPNS@nutrition.org.

Testing Conditions or Examination Feedback

Any candidate who feels that the examination effort was negatively impacted by the proctoring test conditions should notify MonitorEDU immediately. The situation should also be reported to NBPNS at nbpns@nutrition.org within 15 days of the test appointment. Any comments about the test itself should also be reported to NBPNS at nbpns@nutrition.org.

Reporting of Results

Candidates will receive an email within four weeks of the examination with notification of whether they have passed or failed. The email will also include their examination score. Candidates who pass will receive a certificate from NBPNS.

If you do not receive your results within this timeframe, please contact NBPNS at nbpns@nutrition.org

Confidentiality

NBPNS maintains the confidentiality of all examination results. Individual test scores are released only to the candidate.

If you have any questions about your results, please contact NBPNS at NBPNS@nutrition.org.

Attainment of Certification and Recertification

NBPNS maintains a registry of Certified Physician Nutrition Specialists, which is published on its website. As part of the application process through their Prolydian account, candidates must agree to the public posting of their name in this registry upon successful certification.

Physician Nutrition Specialist certification is valid for a period of 10 years. To maintain certification beyond this period, individuals must either retake and pass the current Certification Examination or meet any alternative requirements in effect at that time (e.g., Maintenance of Certification [MOC]).

Here's a more polished and candidate-friendly version that still maintains appropriate authority:

Revocation of Certification

Certification may be revoked for any of the following reasons:

1. Falsification of application materials
2. Revocation of a current physician license
3. Misrepresentation of certification status
4. Misuse of the NBPNS credential or trademark, including association with unscientific or commercial messaging

Individuals have the right to appeal a revocation decision. Appeals are reviewed by the NBPNS Appeals Committee, and it is the responsibility of the individual to initiate the appeals process.

Content of the Examination

The Certification Examination for Physician Nutrition Specialists is a computer-based exam consisting of approximately 240 multiple-choice questions. Candidates are allotted a total testing time of four (4) hours.

The content of the examination is outlined in the Content Outline on the following page.

Examination questions are developed by subject matter experts in physician nutrition and are reviewed by NBPNS psychometricians to ensure accuracy, clarity, and appropriateness. NBPNS is responsible for the development and administration of the examination.

The examination content is weighted approximately as follows:

I.	General Aspects of Nutrition	35%
II.	Nutritional Status Assessment	10%
III.	Obesity and Related Metabolic Conditions	20%
IV.	Disease-Specific Nutrition	25%
V.	Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition Support	10%

Physician Nutrition Specialist Certification Examination Content Areas

The examination is organized into five core domains. Approximate weighting reflects the proportion of questions devoted to each area.

I. General Aspects of Nutrition (35%)

Focus: Foundational principles of human nutrition across the lifespan, including nutrient metabolism and physiological processes.

Key Areas:

- **Life Cycle Nutrition:**
Infancy and childhood; adolescence; pregnancy and lactation; aging; gender differences
- **Physiology & Pathophysiology:**
Biochemical composition of the human body; energy metabolism; starvation and hypermetabolic states; cytokines and eicosanoids; gastrointestinal track
- **Ethical & Legal Considerations:**
Medical/legal issues; nutrition therapy in end-of-life care
- **Nutrients:**
 - Protein (dietary, essential and nonessential amino acids)
 - Carbohydrates (complex, disaccharides, glucose, other)
 - Fiber (properties of dietary fiber; soluble and insoluble fiber)
 - Fats and oils (saturated, trans, mono- and polyunsaturated, cholesterol, others)
 - Vitamins (fat- and water-soluble)
 - Minerals, electrolytes, and water (sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, iron, water, others)
 - Trace elements (zinc, copper, selenium, others)

II. Nutritional Status Assessment (10%)

Focus: Evaluation of nutritional health in clinical and research settings.

Key Areas:

- **Clinical Assessment:**
Medical and diet history; physical exam; anthropometry; nutrition counseling
- **Laboratory & Body Composition:**
Interpretation of laboratory data; body composition assessment

- **Nutritional Requirements:**
Energy expenditure; protein-energy malnutrition; altered requirements in disease states
- **Deficiencies & Excesses**

III. Obesity and Related Metabolic Conditions (20%)

Focus: Mechanisms, consequences, and management of obesity and associated disorders.

Key Areas:

- **Epidemiology & Drivers:**
Physical activity; food environment; psychosocial and obesogenic factors
- **Energy Balance Regulation:**
Appetite control; neuroendocrine pathways; adaptation to starvation; energy expenditure
- **Clinical Conditions:**
Eating disorders; secondary obesity; pediatric obesity; obesity-related comorbidities
- **Management Approaches:**
Lifestyle interventions; behavioral therapy; pharmacotherapy; multidisciplinary care; iatrogenic complications
- **Bariatric Surgery:**
Patient selection; procedures; perioperative and long-term management

IV. Disease-Specific Nutrition (25%)

Focus: Nutrition in the prevention and management of acute and chronic disease.

Key Areas:

- **Gastrointestinal Disorders:**
Intestinal failure; pancreatitis (acute and chronic); inflammatory bowel disease; irritable bowel syndrome; disorders of gastrointestinal motility and flora; celiac; short bowel syndrome
- **Hepatobiliary Disorders:**
Cholestasis; cholelithiasis; hepatic failure
- **Endocrine & Metabolic Conditions:**
Type 1 and type 2 diabetes; metabolic syndrome; endocrine disorders
- **Cardiovascular Disorders**
Hypertension; atherosclerosis; cardiac cachexia
- **Renal Pathophysiology Disorders**

- **Pulmonary Disorders and Respiratory Function**
Sleep apnea; pulmonary cachexia
- **Critical Illness, Infection, and Sepsis**
- **Anemia and Other Hematologic Diseases**
- **Nervous System Disorders**
- **Bone Pathophysiology and Disorders**
Metabolic bone disease; osteoporosis; osteoarthritis; dental
- **Genetic and Pediatric Disorders**
- **Transplantation**
- **Surgery, Trauma, and Alcohol-Related Effects**
- **Psychiatric Disorders**

V. Enteral and Parenteral Nutrition Support (10%)

Focus: Specialized nutrition support in clinical care.

Key Areas:

- **Indications & Modalities:**
Enteral vs. parenteral nutrition; indications and contraindications
- **Clinical Management:**
Routes of administration; nutrient composition; initiation and refeeding; monitoring; transitions and discontinuation
- **Home Nutrition Support**
- **Complications:**
Mechanical; metabolic; infectious; drug–nutrient interactions
- **Pediatric Considerations**

New CMS Specialty Code

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) established a new physician specialty code for Physician Nutrition Specialists, effective October 1, 2026. The new code provides a way for physicians with advanced expertise in clinical nutrition to be identified within the Medicare system and supports claims processing and other Medicare activities. [Learn more.](#)

Updating your Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH) Physician Taxonomy Code

The [CAQH Provider Data Portal \(formerly CAQH ProView\)](#) is an online data repository through which practitioners report their demographic, education, training, certification(s), work history, malpractice history, and other relevant information for authorized organizations to access. As of July 2025, the CAQH platform permits Physician Nutrition Specialists to enter the applicable PNS subspecialty Taxonomy Code and list NBPNS as their certifying board.

To update your CAQH Physician Taxonomy Code:

- a) Log into the **CAQH Provider Data Portal** at <https://proview.caqh.org/Login/Index?ReturnUrl=%2fPR> with your username and password. If you are a first-time user, you will need to [register](#).
- b) Select **Profile Data** and then **Specialties**.
- c) On the Specialties page, scroll down to the section for **Secondary Specialty**, click on the up/down arrow box which opens a blank entry box. Type “nutrition” into the blank area to display the 5 Physician Nutrition Specialist Taxonomy Codes.
- d) Select the appropriate designation for your specialty. Now select **Board Certified** and the **Name of Certifying Board**. Here again, clicking on the up/down arrow box to open an entry box.
- e) Type “nutrition” and select **National Board of Physician Nutrition Specialists**.
- f) Enter your **Certification Number, Initial Certification Date, Expiration Date, Last Recertification Date**.
- g) Select the options for being listed in the directory under this secondary specialty. Make sure to click **Save**.

More Information:
NBPNS@nutrition.org
www.nbpns.org