

STEM SPOTLIGHT

Caitlin Clark

Registered Dietitian
Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare

Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition
University of Memphis
Bachelor of Science in Dietetics with a Minor in Chemistry
University of Arizona



Q How did you select your college major?

A I've always had a keen interest in health and knew that I wanted a career in healthcare. I started college as a Pre-Med major but quickly changed my major to Dietetics after taking a nutrition course as a general education/science elective my freshman year of college. Prior to taking that class, I had no idea how involved nutrition was and also was not aware of the many career possibilities that a degree in dietetics could present to me. I fell more in love with nutrition that year and knew that is what I wanted to do with my life.



Q What was the biggest influence in your selection of major/career?

A I remember taking a one hour class each week that showcased registered dietitians in different settings. There were dietitians working in private practice, hospitals, nursing homes, school systems, the community, and various additional settings. The one that interested me most was a Registered Dietitian who worked for the NFL and the Arizona Cardinals. I have always had a love for sports so this seemed like a fairytale job to me. It was then that I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I wanted to work as a Registered Dietitian.

Q If you could go back to high school and select any elective course to take that would have better prepared you for college, what would it be?

A Like many people, one of my biggest fears is public speaking. I wish that I would have taken a public speaking course in high school to better prepare me for not only college, but life as well. Being able to communicate effectively is a valuable asset. In my line of work, specifically, there is a great need and demand for public education.

Q What is your favorite aspect of your job?

A Food has a substantial impact on life. It can bond us together, comfort us in times of need, nourish our body to perform at its physical peak, and heal us when we are ill. It gives me great satisfaction to be the link between food and health (whether it be physical or emotional health). I love seeing the impact that choosing healthy foods can have on someone's life.

Q How do you/your company make a positive impact on society/our community?

A The rates of obesity and chronic diseases such as Diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease are increasing at a staggering rate. Through education on good nutrition, we are able to promote health and reduce chronic disease. We also help our patients maintain/achieve a healthy weight which can help prevent the occurrence of chronic disease.



Q What is the most interesting thing you have been able to do in your career?

A I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of patients from local celebrities to young children. I have also been able to work with the local universities to prepare students for a career in nutrition/ dietetics. Opportunities exist every day to promote health in the community.

Q What makes you get up each morning excited about your profession?

A The fact that I am able to help people reach their goals and also help those who are ill get better makes coming to work every morning easy.

Q What advice would you like to share with K-12 students who are considering your profession?

A Dietetics is a wide open field. Although many of us work in a hospital environment, there are opportunities to work in private practice, in the school systems, for the government, in public health settings, in research, at gym/wellness facilities, and for sports teams. Do whatever it is that interests you the most. The need for nutrition experts is increasing on a daily basis so job security is a huge pro to choosing this field of work. However, do not choose this field for the money. It's a lot easier to come to work when you are doing something you love versus coming to work for a paycheck.