

AN INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION HEALTH COACH'S SCOPE OF PRACTICE

With millions of people suffering from preventable lifestyle-related diseases, Integrative Nutrition Health Coaches are uniquely positioned to bring about lasting change in the lives of individuals all across the globe. Health Coaches bridge the gap between wellness professionals and their patients, helping clients develop strategies to enact real, lasting lifestyle changes that enhance overall wellness.

While there are infinite possibilities for how Health Coaches can help their clients, remember that the role of a Health Coach is not to diagnose, treat, or take responsibility for bringing about wellness changes in a client's life; rather, he/she guides and supports the development of and progress toward personal wellness goals.

Naturally, some clients will have more complex needs. While additional professional certifications or life experiences may qualify a coach to take on more complex clients, it's important to recognize when client needs go beyond the scope of health coaching.

Many Integrative Nutrition Health Coaches find success in supporting complex clients as a member of a larger wellness team involving healthcare professionals like doctors and therapists. For example, a client who is depressed would benefit from the support of both a Health Coach and a licensed therapist as a Health Coach alone cannot fully support the client's needs.

SCOPE OF PRACTICE GUIDELINES

We've developed the Scope of Practice guidelines to support you as you grow your practice. Use these guidelines to navigate the scope of your work with clients, but remember that every Health Coach's practice is unique and it's important to always trust your instincts when working with clients.

	Go for it	Avoid it
Conditions	Do work with people who are generally healthy with mild health concerns such as headache, fatigue, or sugar cravings.	Don't say that you can cure disease or work with people with complex advanced diseases such as cancer or kidney failure.
Age	Do work with adults. Get written authorization from a legal guardian to work with children.	Don't work with minors without written authorization from a legal guardian.
Medical	Do suggest clients ask their medical doctor about alternatives to medication and get a second doctor's opinion if they're unsure.	Don't suggest clients stop or change prescription medications or discontinue visits with their doctor.

	Go for it	Avoid it
Diet	Do suggest ways to “crowd out” caffeine, sugar, alcohol, tobacco, processed food, and dairy (if applicable).	Don’t exclude major food groups or recommend extreme detox programs.
Supplements	Do recommend superfoods, multivitamins, and mineral supplements under a doctor’s supervision.	Don’t prescribe a regimen. Controversial supplements or high doses should be experimented with only under supervision of a medical doctor.
Exercise	Do encourage clients to begin gentle, low-risk exercise changes such as walking.	Don’t encourage vigorous exercise without consulting a physician.
Relationships	Do give people time to talk about their important relationships. Promote participation in social events to meet new people.	Don’t promote divorce or conflict with friends and family.

	Go for it	Avoid it
Career	Do recommend that clients explore new hobbies and interests.	Don't recommend that clients quit their jobs.
Spirituality	Do advise clients to engage in self-reflection and experience nature.	Don't advise clients to change their religious affiliations.
Liability	Do get liability insurance and contact IIN if any issues arise. Use the IIN Program Agreement (provided later in the curriculum) when working with clients.	Don't call yourself a registered dietitian or nutritionist.