The Mediterranean Diet

What are the benefits of a Mediterranean diet? Eating a Mediterranean-style diet can help lower risk of cardiovascular disease, such as stroke and heart attack.[1] This diet also helps control diabetes and obesity, and helps prevent cancers.[2,3,4]

What is a Mediterranean-style diet? It is a delicious diet that people in Greece, Spain, Italy, and other Mediterranean countries have eaten for centuries. Research shows that sticking to a Mediterranean-style diet may significantly reduce overall mortality by 14-25%![5,6] The following are eight key components of Mediterranean-style diets.[7]



At least 2 cups of veggies/day

Whenever you can, add a serving of veggies to your meals, including to eggs, soups, salads, sandwiches, wraps, stir-frys, pizza, and smoothies. Have at least one serving/day of raw vegetables—such as a green salad or a snack of fresh carrots.



At least 2 cups of fresh fruit/day

Eat brightly colored fruit—such as blueberries, strawberries, cantaloupe, and yellow peaches. Avoid dried fruit and fruit juices, as they contain too much sugar and calories.

1 serving of fruit = ½ cup



One serving/day of nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds—such as walnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds—contain healthy fats, fiber, and protein. A study found that eating just 3 servings/week of nuts reduced all-cause mortality by 39%![7] A serving (1 ounce) is about 200 calories.

1 ounce of nuts = ¼ cup = *small handful*

Limit dairy to 7 ounces/day

This is a little less than a cup of unsweetened yogurt. Other options include: non-fat milk, soy and almond milk, and low-fat cheese.





At least 2 servings/day of whole grains

Instead of white bread, white rice, and processed foods (such as processed breakfast cereals), have ½ cup brown rice or quinoa, which is a great whole grain substitute, or 1 slice of a hearty bread (with at least 2 grams fiber/slice). *See Whole Grains handout.*



At least 2 servings/week of legumes

Legumes are protein-rich and include beans, lentils, and peas. They are a great substitute for red meat. Studies have found that people who reduce their consumption of red meat have lower mortality risk.[8]



Two 3.5oz servings/week of seafood

Instead of fried seafood, have baked, broiled, or grilled seafood. Avoid seafood that contains toxins, especially that with high levels of mercury. Good options include salmon, sardines, tilapia, trout, and crab.



Using olive oil as primary fat/oil

In Mediterranean diets, a high percentage of calories, up to 40-50%, typically comes from healthy fats like olive oil, instead of "bad fats" like butter and other animal fats. *See High Quality Fats handout.*

ACTION PLAN

- Which of the tips will you try? Circle them.
- When will you start? _____
- How confident are you that you will accomplish your goal (from 0-100%)? _____
- Follow-up plan
  _____
  _____
  _____

References:

[1] Circulation, 99(6), 779-785.
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[7] BMC Medicine, 2013; (11) 164.
[8] Arch Intern Med. 2012; 172(7):555-63.

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