

Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet incorporates the basics of healthy eating into the traditional cooking style of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It traditionally includes fruits, vegetables, grains, fish, and plenty of monounsaturated fats. Easily a way of life rather than a diet, it has been linked to a decreased risk of chronic disease.

benefits of eating a Mediterranean diet

- The Mediterranean diet has been associated with a lower level of oxidized low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol — the "bad" cholesterol that's more likely to build up deposits in your arteries.
- A recent study showed that a restricted-calorie Mediterranean diet could be even more effective for weight loss than a low-fat diet.
- Being physically active and eating a nutritious diet of whole foods that are filling and satisfying can enable people to control weight, lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and Alzheimer's disease, and basically protect against chronic diseases.

Mediterranean diet foods

FAT AND PROTEIN The Mediterranean diet features olive oil as the primary source of fat. Olive oil provides monounsaturated fat — a type of fat that can help reduce LDL cholesterol levels when used in place of saturated or trans fats. "Extra-virgin" and "virgin" olive oils — the least processed forms — also contain the highest levels of protective plant compounds that provide antioxidant effects.

The focus of the Mediterranean diet isn't on limiting total fat consumption, but rather to make wise choices about the types of fat you eat. It discourages saturated fats and hydrogenated oils (trans fats), both of which contribute to heart disease. Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats, such as canola oil and some nuts, contain the beneficial linolenic acid (a type of omega-3 fatty acid).

Animal products are a part of the Mediterranean diet but in small amounts. Small portions of poultry, red meat, and modest amounts of dairy may be consumed, but the main source of protein is beans and legumes. Fish however is an important part of most Mediterranean diets. Omega-3 fatty acids lower triglycerides, decrease blood clotting, are associated with decreased sudden heart attack, improve the health of your blood vessels, and help moderate blood pressure. Fatty fish — such as mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna, and salmon — are rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

WHOLE GRAINS Grains in the Mediterranean region are typically whole grain and usually contain very few unhealthy trans fats. Whole grains are a good source of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that help fight disease, and unlike refined starches and grains, they tend to have a lower glycemic index.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES The Mediterranean diet includes very large amounts of fruits and vegetables. In fact, decades ago, Greece had the highest vegetable consumption in the world. Include six or more servings a day of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables.

ALCOHOL The health effects of alcohol have been debated for many years, and most doctors are reluctant to encourage alcohol consumption because of the health consequences of excessive drinking. However, alcohol — in moderation — has been associated with a reduced risk of heart disease in some research studies. The Mediterranean diet typically includes a moderate amount of wine. This means no more than 5 ounces of wine daily for women or men over age 65, and no more than 10 ounces of wine daily for men under age 65. More than this may increase the risk of health problems, including increased risk of certain types of cancer. If you're unable to limit your alcohol intake to the amounts defined above, if you have a personal or family history of alcohol abuse, or if you have heart or liver disease, refrain from drinking wine or any other alcohol. Also, keep in mind that red wine may trigger migraines in some people.

tips for following a Mediterranean diet

- Get plenty of exercise
- Eat primarily plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts
- Replace butter with healthy fats such as olive oil and canola oil
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor foods
- Limit red meat to no more than a few times a month
- Eat fish at least twice a week
- Drink red wine in moderation
- Enjoy meals with family or friends

Plenty Of:	
Fish	Olive Oil
Olives	Beans and Lentils
Avocado	Fruits
Vegetables	Spices and Herbs
Nuts	
In Moderation:	
Chicken	Red Wine
Turkey	Whole-Grain Bread
Eggs	Brown or Wild Rice
Cheese	Oatmeal
Yogurt	Barley
Whole Wheat Pasta	Potatoes
Limit:	
Beef	Pork
Sugar	Butter or Margarine
Refined Grains	Caffeine