

## Mediterranean diet

### **The traditional eating habits of countries bordering the Mediterranean Seas**

Interest in the diet began in the 1960s when it was observed that countries such as Italy and Greece had lower rates of heart disease compared to other countries. Studies found the Mediterranean diet is associated with reduced risk factors for cardiovascular disease. The Mediterranean diet is a way of eating rather than a standard diet.

### **A Mediterranean style diet typically includes:**

- Daily intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds
- Olive oil as a primary fat source
- Low to moderate amounts of low fat or fat free dairy products
- Low to moderate amounts of eggs, fish and poultry
- Limiting saturated fats, fatty or processed meats and red meats
- Limiting added sugars and highly processed foods

This style of diet can help prevent heart disease and stroke by reducing cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure levels. The Mediterranean diet emphasizes fish, poultry, nuts and legumes as protein sources rather than red meats.

It also recommends minimally processed, plant based foods. Fruit is encouraged as a natural source of sugar instead of common desserts such as pie or cake. Other important elements include sharing meals with family and friends and regular physical activity.

### **Plant based**

- Foundation of the diet is vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, herbs and beans
- Moderate amounts of fish, poultry and eggs are consumed (typically several days per week)
- Limited intake of red meat
- The Mediterranean diet typically allows red wine in moderation



**MEDITERRANEAN DIET +**

## Healthy Fats

- Healthy fats are integral to the Mediterranean diet
- Olive oil is the primary source of added fat
- Olive oil is a monounsaturated fat which helps lower low density lipoprotein (LDL) or “bad” cholesterol
- Limit intake of saturated and trans fats
- Fish are an excellent source of omega 3 fatty acids which help reduce triglyceride levels

## The Take Away

- Aim for 7-10 servings of fruits and vegetable per day
- Switch to whole grain bread, cereal and pasta
- Replace butter with olive oil when cooking
- Eat more seafood
- Reduce red meats
- Enjoy moderate amounts of low fat dairy such as Greek yogurt
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt when seasoning foods



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