

## Mediterranean Diet - A Healthy Way of Eating

The Mediterranean diet is a way of eating rather than a formal diet plan. It features foods eaten in Greece, Spain, southern Italy and France, and other countries that border the Mediterranean Sea.

This way of eating emphasizes foods like fish, fruits, vegetables, beans, high-fiber breads and whole grains, and olive oil. A Mediterranean-style diet may help lower your risk for certain diseases, improve your mood, and boost your energy levels. It may also help keep your heart and brain healthy.

The diet calls for:

Choosing healthy (unsaturated) fats, such as olive oil and certain nut or seed oils like canola, soybean, and flaxseed. About 35% to 40% of daily calories can come from fat, mainly unsaturated fats. These types of oils may have a protective effect on the heart.

The Mediterranean diet is known to help prevent heart disease. Now new research extends these benefits to Metabolic Syndrome, a cluster of risk factors that includes high blood pressure, abdominal obesity, high cholesterol levels, and insulin resistance that increase risk for diabetes and heart disease.

The conclusion of the studies regarding the Mediterranean diet are that consumption of a Mediterranean diet lowers the prevalence and progression of the metabolic syndrome helps better support data from trials that already suggest this. For example, omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in olive oil and other monounsaturated fats, are anti-inflammatory. Inflammation is a known risk factor for heart disease and stroke. It makes sense that a Mediterranean lifestyle can tame this inflammation and provide a protective benefit. This lifestyle can improve heart health even without weight loss.

### TIPS FOR CHANGING YOUR DIET

Dip bread in a mix of olive oil and fresh herbs instead of using butter

Add avocado slices to your sandwich instead of bacon

Have fish for lunch or dinner instead of red meat. Brush it with olive oil, and broil it or grill it.

Sprinkle your salad with seeds or nuts instead of cheese.

Dip raw vegetables in a vinaigrette dressing or hummus instead of dips made from mayonnaise or sour cream.

Have a piece of fruit for dessert instead of a piece of cake. Try baked apples.

Use herbs and spices instead of salt to add flavor to foods.

Above all, STAY ACTIVE.

The Mediterranean lifestyle isn't just about eating healthy foods. It's also about being active. Try to get at least 2 ½ hours of moderate aerobic activity a week.

Excerpts taken from Web MD, 2011  
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