Following the Mediterranean Diet

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Why follow the Mediterranean diet?

Research has found that the eating principles of this diet may help to lower your risk of:

- Cardiovascular disease and stroke
- Cancer
- Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases
Origins

- Inspired by countries surrounding Mediterranean Sea

- 1950s– Seven Countries Study, Dr. Ancel Keys
  - Mediterranean – lower mortality rates
  - 90% lower heart disease rate for Greek men ages 50-54 vs. American men
  - 40% of calories from fat

- Harvard researchers and World Health Organization (WHO) created Mediterranean Diet Pyramid in 1994
Recent studies on the Mediterranean Diet

- "A Mediterranean diet without calorie restrictions that is supplemented with EVOO (extra-virgin olive oil) or nuts may reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes."
  
  Annals of Internal Medicine, 7 January 2014

- Past studies have suggested that following a Mediterranean diet may reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. Now, a new analysis of previous research suggests that the diet, supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil or nuts, may reduce the risk of peripheral artery disease.
  
  Journal of the American Medical Association January 22/29, 2014, Vol 311, No. 4

- “Results revealed that women who followed a Mediterranean diet, or a similar diet, had a 40% better chance of living past the age of 70, compared with those who did not follow the Mediterranean diet.”
  
  Annals of Internal Medicine, 4 November 2013.

- The Mediterranean diet appears to be associated with preserving memory and cognitive abilities, researchers from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), USA, and the University of Athens, Greece, reported in the journal
  
  Neurology (April 30th, 2013 issue).
Principles of the Mediterranean Diet

- Focus on plant-based foods – fiber, antioxidants, and nutrients
  - Fruits and vegetables
  - Beans and legumes
  - Whole grains

- Focus on healthy unsaturated fats; limit saturated fats
  - Fish and skinless white meat
  - Nuts and seeds
  - Olive oil and other healthy fats/oils
  - Low-fat or fat-free dairy
Fiber, Antioxidants and Heart Health

- Soluble fiber
  - Can help lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels
  - Found in oats, peas, beans, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, barley and psyllium

- Antioxidants
  - Protect cells from damage
  - High intake associated with lower risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases

- Where does Mediterranean diet provide fiber and antioxidants?
Fruits

- Mediterranean diet recommends:
  - 2-3 servings daily
  - One serving = 1 whole fresh medium-sized fruit, or 1 cup fresh fruit
  - Increase fiber – include as much of whole fruit as possible
  - Especially antioxidant-rich: prunes, plums, raisins, red grapes, berries, oranges, cherries
Vegetables

- Two or more servings daily
- One serving = 1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked vegetables
  - At least one serving raw
- Increase fiber – include as much of whole vegetable as possible
- Especially antioxidant-rich: kale, spinach, Brussels sprouts, alfalfa sprouts, broccoli, beets, red bell peppers, onions, corn, eggplant
Whole Grains

- 4-6 servings daily
- 1 serving = 1 slice bread, ½ cup whole wheat pasta or brown rice
- Less effect on triglycerides than white, refined grains
- Soluble fiber – oats
- Antioxidants and many nutrients
- Bread often dipped in olive oil in Mediterranean
Legumes and Beans

- 3 or more servings weekly
- 1 serving = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- Legumes: split peas, lentils, peanuts
- Beans: red, green, black, lima, kidney, soy, navy, etc.
- High in fiber and protein, low in fat except for peanuts
Focus on Fats

- **Saturated Fats**
  - Raise LDL (bad) cholesterol

- **Unsaturated Fats**
  - Lower LDL (bad) cholesterol
  - **Monounsaturated fats**
    - Preferred – leaves HDL (good) cholesterol alone
    - Olive oil
    - Avocado, nuts (almonds, cashews)
  - **Polyunsaturated fats**
    - Walnuts, flaxseed, sunflower and chia seeds

These foods contain saturated fats.
Trans and Hydrogenated Fats

- Stick margarine, shortening, baked goods, processed and fried foods, nondairy creamers and whipped toppings
- Raise LDL (bad) cholesterol
- Lower HDL (good) cholesterol
- Avoid at all costs for heart health!
Omega-3 Fatty Acids

- Benefits:
  - Lower triglycerides, decrease blood clotting
  - Decreased risk of sudden heart attack
  - Improve health of blood vessels, help moderate blood pressure

- Fatty fish – herring, sardines, tuna, salmon, lake trout

- Walnuts, flaxseed, canola and olive oils
Fish and Shellfish

- 3 or more servings weekly – as often as you wish
- 1 serving = 3-5 ounces fish OR 6-7 ounces shellfish
- 1+ servings should be fatty fish

Cooking method matters

Mercury content
- Highest are Minnesota caught walleye >20” and northern pike >30”
- Also high: MN caught bass, catfish, walleye <20”, northern pike <30”, and other MN gamefish; canned white tuna
Nuts and Seeds

- 1 or more servings weekly – **raw, unsalted**
- 1 serving = ¼ cup
- Limit to 1 serving per day
- Especially suggested by Mediterranean diet: walnuts, hazelnuts and almonds
White Meat

- Chicken and turkey, skinless
- Leaner white meat means less saturated fat and more protein
- 1 serving = 3 ounces
  - Deck of cards
- Alternate protein intake between white meat, fish, and beans/legumes

*Cooking Tip:* Try cooking your chicken or turkey in olive oil.
Dairy

- Preferably fat-free, or 1%
- Avoid/limit whole and 2% milk products, butter, ice cream, margarine (depends on type)
- **Greek yogurt** or fat-free/low-fat
- Cured and fatty cheeses – limit to one serving weekly (1 ounce, size of 4 dice)
  - Cured – aged more than 6 months
  - Fatty – cheddar, cream cheese, brie, bleu
Alcohol and Other Foods in Moderation

- Dark Chocolate – 50% cocoa is best
- Eggs – Same frequency as dairy and white meat on Mediterranean Diet Pyramid
- Alcohol
  - Red wine is “most Mediterranean”, white is fine
  - Limit intake to 1 glass per day (5 oz for men, 3 oz for women) and drink with a meal to reduce risk of heart disease
Following MyPlate the Mediterranean Way

- Focus on fish or beans/legumes for protein source
- Whole grains
- Healthy fats
- Fat-free (or low-fat) dairy

Choose MyPlate.gov
Foods to Avoid or Limit

- All of these foods in excess may contribute to heart disease:
  - Red and processed meats
  - High-sugar/high-fat foods
  - High-fat dairy products
  - Soda (pop)
Grocery Store Tour - Mediterranean Style
Fad Diets – be weary of these claims:

- **Quick/rapid weight loss**
  - Slow and steady wins the race!
  - Magic fat burning food combinations or pills or drinks that speed up your metabolism

- **Quantities and Limitations**
  - Avoid unlimited quantities of any food
  - Avoid a diet that eliminates an entire food group

- **Specific Food Combinations**
  - No evidence that certain foods combined or eating at certain times of day helps with weight loss

- **Rigid Menus**

- **No Need to Exercise**
Fad Diets: Myths and Truths

**Myth:** Occasionally following a fad diet is a safe way to quickly lose weight.

**Fact:** Many fad diets are developed by people with no science or health background so some fad diets can even be considered harmful to people with certain health problems.
Fad Diets: Myths and Truths

**Myth:** Eating carbohydrates causes weight gain.

**Fact:** Calories cause weight gain. Excess carbohydrates are no more fattening than calories from any source. Despite the claims of low-carb diet books, a high-carbohydrate diet does not promote fat storage by enhancing insulin resistance.
Fad Diets: Myths and Truths

**Myth:** Snacking is bad – it just adds unnecessary calories.

**Fact:** Healthful snacking, including carbs and protein, can help you body stayed fueled so you will be less likely to overeat at the next meal. Don’t overdo it though – control portions.
Fad Diets: Myths and Truths

**Myth:** Eating just before bedtime is fattening.

**Fact:** What and how much you eat, not when makes the difference. Calories have the same effect on the body no matter when they are consumed.

Research does show that regular meals, especially breakfast, helps promote weight loss by reducing fat intake and minimizing impulsive snacking.
Bottom Line – you knew it

- To maintain a healthy weight, build muscle and lose fat, the best path is a lifelong combination of eating smarter (making informed food choices) and moving more.

- See a registered dietitian for a personalized plan!
  - Plans need to be realistic for you.
Sources


Mayo Clinic website.

THANK YOU!!!