

Mediterranean Diet: A Healthy Lifestyle

For thousands of years, residents of the Mediterranean coastal region have thrived on regular exercise and a diet high in plant foods and monounsaturated fats. Studies continue to show that this way of life leads to long, healthy lives with less disease.

A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans, seeds and lean meats provides thousands of micronutrients, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals that can help protect against cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, and other conditions common to the aging process.

This combination of nutrition and exercise is most effective when it becomes a "way of eating and living" rather than simply a "diet."

There are many aspects of the Mediterranean diet that cannot be replaced with supplements, such as the monounsaturated fats found in avocado, fish, canola oil, and olive oils that fight inflammation and disease on the cellular level.

According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2003, it may not be just olive oil itself, but the synergy between all Mediterranean foods that produces health benefits. The diet's protective affect against obesity and type 2 diabetes is likely due to its high concentration of plant foods, fish and olive oil, along with a moderate consumption of alcohol.

The Mediterranean Diet Pattern

1. It's never too late to start.
2. Get 30 minutes of exercise daily.
3. Enjoy your meals in a calm, relaxed environment, preferably with a family member or friend.
4. Drink alcohol or purple grape juice:
 - Women 1 - 4 ounces of wine (red wine) or 1 ounce of liquor
 - Men 2- 4 ounces of wine or 2 ounces of liquor

Foods Allowed

- Fresh, locally grown and minimally-processed foods
- Fish or shellfish twice a week
- 5 servings of vegetables a day
- 4 servings of fruit a day
- Legumes - peas, beans, lentils, alfalfa, clover and lupins
- 1 handful a day of tree nuts daily - walnuts, pecans, almonds or hazel nuts (avoid honey-roasted or heavily salted nuts)
- Seeds
- Olive oil and canola oil
- 2 servings a day of whole grain breads eaten without margarine or butter
- Pasta (whole grain if possible)
- Add herbs and spices to flavor food instead of salt
- Lean chicken and turkey
- Pork and beef eaten sparingly

Foods to Avoid

- Daily beef or pork
- All fast foods
- Sodas
- Artificial sweeteners and fat substitutes
- Corn and potato chips
- Food and drinks containing high fructose corn syrup

For further information visit www.cdc.gov/HeartDisease/prevention.htm.

*The information provided is not meant as a replacement for a physician's care.
Some or all of the above may help you feel more balanced and give you an overall increased sense of wellbeing.*