



The Mediterranean Diet

Based on how people eat and drink in the 16 countries that border the Mediterranean Sea, this healthy eating plan can reduce your risk of developing heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's disease.

Follow 8 Simple Steps for Good Health

- 1. Eat lots of vegetables.** There are so many choices! From a simple plate of sliced fresh tomatoes drizzled with olive oil and topped with crumbled feta cheese to stunning salads, garlicky greens, fragrant soups and stews, healthy pizzas, or oven-roasted medleys, vegetables are vitally important to the fresh tastes and delicious flavors of the Med Diet. Can you fill half your plate with them at lunch and dinner?
- 2. Change the way you think about meat.** If you eat meat, have smaller amounts. For example, add small strips of sirloin to a vegetable sauté, or garnish a dish of pasta with diced prosciutto. As a main course, have smaller portions (3 ounces or less) of chicken or lean meat.
- 3. Enjoy some dairy products.** Eat Greek or plain yogurt, and try smaller amounts of a variety of cheeses.
- 4. Eat seafood twice a week.** Fish such as tuna, herring, salmon, and sardines are rich in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, and shellfish including mussels, oysters, and clams have similar benefits for brain and heart health.
- 5. Cook a vegetarian meal one night a week.** Build these meals around beans, whole grains, and vegetables, and heighten the flavor with fragrant herbs and spices. When one night feels comfortable, try two nights per week.
- 6. Use good fats.** Include sources of healthy fats in daily meals, especially extra-virgin olive oil, nuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, olives, and avocados.
- 7. Switch to whole grains.** Whole grains are naturally rich in many important nutrients; their fuller, nuttier taste and extra fiber keep you satisfied for hours. Cook traditional Mediterranean grains like bulgur, barley, farro and brown, black or red rice, and favor products made with whole grain flour.
- 8. For dessert, eat fresh fruit.** Choose from a wide range of delicious fresh fruits — from fresh figs and oranges to pomegranates, grapes and apples. Instead of daily ice cream or cookies, save sweets for a special treat or celebration.

Dietary Information and Recommendations

Key components of the Mediterranean diet

The Mediterranean diet emphasizes:

- Eating primarily plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts
- Replacing butter with a healthy fats, such as olive oil
- Using herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor foods
- Limiting red meat to no more than a few times a month
- Eating fish and poultry at least twice a week
- Drinking red wine in moderation (optional)

The diet also recognizes the importance of being physically active, and enjoying meals with family and friends.

The Truth about The Heart Healthy Diet:

1. Research over the past ten years has shown that *carbohydrates* are the enemy, NOT *fat*
2. Your cholesterol profile will improve when you follow a low carb diet, not a low fat diet
3. Following a heart healthy diet leads to weight loss, improved cholesterol, and prevention/improvement of diabetes, all leading to a lower risk of heart attack and stroke

What are carbohydrates?

- Carbohydrates are sweets and starches
- Carbohydrates are broken down in the intestines and absorbed to become blood sugar. An excess of blood sugar leads to a storage as fat leading to weight gain.
- Carbohydrates like bread and corn may not look like sugar on your plate, but in your body, that's what they are converted to when digested. A bagel is no different than a bag of skittles to your body.

Examples of carbohydrates are bread, pasta, candy, cookies, crackers, cereals, sweet beverages, sugar, cake, pizza, and processed foods (all those foods within the center aisles of the supermarket)

Foods to avoid: simple carbohydrates

- Processed foods (those items in a bag or a box)
- High fructose corn syrup
- Corn products
- Cakes, cookies, pastries
- Sweet sugary beverages
- White bread, cookies, crackers, most cereals
- White potatoes
- White Rice

Complex carbohydrates are okay in moderation

- Whole wheat/multigrain bread
- Most fruit
- Whole wheat pasta
- Sweet potatoes
- Brown rice/wild rice

Recommendations:

1. Reduce complex carbohydrates
2. Eliminate simple carbohydrates and processed foods
3. Always read the **ingredients**
 - a. If greater than 3 ingredients, this is a processed food
 - b. With whole grain products, make sure regular wheat flour is not the first ingredient

For Example:

Instead of eating regular pasta one day per week, eat whole wheat pasta once every two weeks (eliminating simple carbs reducing overall carbs.)

- We do not endorse one specific diet but recommend a diet such as The Mediterranean Diet

What's for Breakfast?

- **Most mornings**, start your day with oatmeal and fruit or whole-grain toast and low-fat yogurt with berries. Choose fresh fruit instead of fruit juice.
- **Three to four mornings a week**, enjoy some eggs. Experiment with poached eggs over whole-wheat toast or maybe a bean and low-fat cheese burrito.
- **Only a couple times a month**, splurge with sausage and whole-grain waffles or bacon and eggs. Try low-fat turkey sausage or bacon, and top of your waffle with fruit and sugar-free syrup.

What's for Lunch?

- **Most days**, try different kinds of salads. Add black beans or chickpeas, cooked shrimp or salmon, and olive oil and vinegar dressing. Snack on fruit, nuts, or fresh carrots and snap peas.
- **A couple times a week**, have a piece of grilled chicken or a turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread. Add tomatoes, lettuce, and avocado to your sandwich. Enjoy some low-fat cottage cheese with fruit.
- **A couple times a month**, order that hamburger you've been craving, but pass on the cheese. Substitute fruit or salad for the fries. For dessert, try angel food cake with fresh fruit or frozen low-fat yogurt.

What's for Dinner?

- **Most evenings**, fill your plate with vegetables that are steamed, roasted, or sautéed in a little olive oil with herbs and spices. Add beans, lentils, brown rice, or whole-grain pasta.
- **A couple times a week**, fill half your plate with vegetables, and add some chicken or fish and brown rice or quinoa. Enjoy some fruit for dessert.
- **A couple times a month**, add roast beef, lamb chop, or pork tenderloin and barley to your half plate of vegetables. For a treat, fix fruit-based desserts like a low-sugar cobbler or berries with low-fat topping.