

Mediterranean Diet

Why Choose the Mediterranean Diet?

The Mediterranean diet is one of the most extensively researched and widely recommended dietary patterns for promoting long-term health. It emphasizes whole, nutrient-dense foods that support heart health, brain function, healthy weight, and reduced risk of chronic illness.

Key benefits include:

- **Heart health:** Linked to lower cholesterol, blood pressure, and reduced risk of heart disease.
- **Brain protection:** Associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer's and cognitive decline.
- **Weight management:** Promotes satiety and steady blood sugar, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.
- **Longevity:** Studies show people who follow this way of eating tend to live longer, healthier lives.
- **Anti-inflammatory:** Rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, it helps reduce chronic inflammation.

This diet isn't restrictive, it's flexible, flavorful, and sustainable for most lifestyles. It's more about balance and enjoying real, minimally processed foods than following strict rules.

How to Follow the Mediterranean Diet

Enjoy freely:

- Vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, potatoes, whole grains, herbs, spices, fish, seafood, and extra-virgin olive oil

Enjoy in moderation:

- Poultry, eggs, cheese, and yogurt

Enjoy only on occasion:

- Red meat, sugar-sweetened drinks, added sugars, processed meats, refined grains, refined oils, and other highly processed foods

Foods to Eat Regularly

Vegetables

Tomatoes, broccoli, kale, spinach, onions, cauliflower, carrots, Brussels sprouts, cucumbers, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips

Fruits

Apples, bananas, oranges, pears, strawberries, grapes, dates, figs, melons, peaches

Nuts, Seeds, and Nut Butters

Almonds, walnuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, cashews, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, almond butter, peanut butter

Legumes

Beans, peas, lentils, pulses, peanuts, chickpeas

Whole Grains

Oats, brown rice, rye, barley, corn, buckwheat, whole wheat bread and pasta

Fish and Seafood

Salmon, sardines, trout, tuna, mackerel, shrimp, oysters, clams, crab, mussels

Poultry

Chicken, duck, turkey

Eggs

Chicken, quail, and duck eggs

Dairy

Cheese, yogurt, milk (preferably from grass-fed or minimally processed sources)

Herbs and Spices

Garlic, basil, mint, rosemary, sage, nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper

Healthy Fats

Extra virgin olive oil, olives, avocados, avocado oil

Foods to Limit

Added Sugars

Soda, candy, ice cream, table sugar, syrup, baked goods

Refined Grains

White bread, pasta, tortillas, chips, crackers

Trans Fats

Margarine, fried foods, many packaged or processed foods

Refined Oils

Soybean oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil, grapeseed oil

Processed Meats

Sausages, hot dogs, deli meats, beef jerky

Highly Processed Foods

Fast food, microwave meals, popcorn packets, granola bars, convenience snacks

References

1. Estruch, R., et al. (2018). *Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease with a Mediterranean Diet Supplemented with Extra-Virgin Olive Oil or Nuts*. New England Journal of Medicine, 378(25), e34.
2. Willett, W. C., & Sacks, F. (1995). *Mediterranean diet pyramid: A cultural model for healthy eating*. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 61(6 Suppl), 1402S–1406S.
3. Mayo Clinic. (2023). *Mediterranean Diet: A heart-healthy eating plan*. Retrieved from [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)