

The Mediterranean Diet Guide

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Savor and *enjoy* your food.

Slow down. Look at the food; smell the food.

Chew carefully, paying attention to textures and flavors.
Put your fork down between bites. Breathe.

You can benefit from eating more mindfully by
adding just five minutes to your usual routine.

Even this little extra time can allow you to notice a little more, relax and
destress a bit, and get more enjoyment from your eating experience.

The Mediterranean diet: Your complete how-to guide

Learn how to make it work for you.

The Mediterranean diet even *sounds* good.

It conjures images of stucco villas perched over sparkling seas, where fresh sardines leap onto your plate, already golden, crispy, and dripping with olive oil.

And let's not forget the vino.

But scientifically-speaking, the Mediterranean diet is also good *for* you.

That's because it's associated with a lowered risk of many diseases, plus a longer lifespan.

There's a caveat, though: Maximizing these health benefits isn't about just eating popular Mediterranean "superfoods."

The real "secret" to the Mediterranean diet? Consistently eating **a range of nutritious whole foods**—and adopting certain lifestyle practices.

In this guide, we'll give you all the details. You'll learn:

- **How the Mediterranean diet was created** (or rather, stumbled upon)
- **The health benefits you can expect from the Mediterranean diet**
- **Why the Mediterranean diet isn't for everyone**
- **Whether red wine lives up to the hype**
- **How to apply the Mediterranean "way of life"**

Hop on the gondola and let's explore.

Mediterranean Diet Basics

Back in the 1950s, Ancel Keys, a scientist at the University of Minnesota, noticed something:

Poor, small towns in Italy hosted strikingly healthy citizens.

He attributed their robust health to their diet—largely composed of whole grains, legumes, fruit, and vegetables, moderate amounts of fish, and low amounts of dairy and meat.

Their primary fat source was olive oil, and they drank wine moderately.

These Mediterranean villagers also flavored their meals with an abundance of herbs, garlic, and onions.

Their food choices added up to a diet:

- **Low in saturated fats**, with almost zero trans fats
- **Moderate to high in unsaturated fats**
- **Moderate in protein**
- **Rich in fiber and complex carbohydrates**
- **Rich in vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals**

Italians weren't the only people eating this way. Researchers documented similar eating patterns in Spain and Greece.

Over the decades since Keys' original findings, the Mediterranean diet has been applied and studied in other contexts—like Canada, the US, India, and Western Europe. It still holds up.

So there *is* something special about a traditional Mediterranean eating style.

And at the same time...

It's not just about the food.

In addition to having a distinct dietary pattern, "traditional" Mediterraneans also tend to practice specific cultural and lifestyle habits.

For example, they **buy their foods locally**, making multiple trips a week—often by foot—to local farm-sourced vendors.

They may also **harvest produce from their own garden**. This means that food is exceptionally fresh, and exercise is rolled into the act of procuring foods.

Mediterranean cooking and eating tends to be **slow, social, and joyous**.

Often, **meals are eaten with family** from multiple generations. It's common for everyone to gather at Nonna's every Sunday, where they'll eat her handmade gnocchi with sauce made from her own garden tomatoes.

Compare that to how people frequently eat in modern Western culture.

Many of us are conditioned to quickly scarf down whatever's in front of us. Often, that may be something highly-processed that's easy to prep and clean up, such as a packaged burrito or a salad bowl of cereal.

Plus, it's not a leap to imagine that breakfast, lunch, or dinner (or maybe all three!) are consumed in front of a device or steering wheel—perhaps while alone or barely speaking.

If really stressed and pressed, we might even eat over the sink.

That's no way to enjoy a meal.

More important: If this describes your eating habits, you may be missing out on part of what makes the traditional Mediterranean lifestyle so notable.

That's because:

- **Eating locally** is associated with better nutrition, less-processed food, obesity prevention, and lowered risk of diet-related chronic disease.¹
- **Eating communally** is related to better nutrition, especially in children who eat with their families.² In addition, those who eat socially often feel happier, are more trusting of others, are more involved in their local communities and have more social support.^{3 4}
- **Eating slowly** is linked to a lowered risk of obesity, even when controlling for other lifestyle habits such as alcohol consumption, exercise, and smoking.⁵ And if you're looking to lose weight, learning to eat slowly can help you moderate food consumption and feel more satisfied.⁶
- **Eating home-cooked meals** more often (at least five meals at home per week) is associated with eating more fruit and vegetables.⁷

In other words...

Getting all the benefits of a traditional Mediterranean diet isn't just about what you eat. It's also about *where*, *why*, and *how* you eat.

Eat more like a traditional Mediterranean, and you'll probably experience some health benefits.

But *live* more like a traditional Mediterranean? That's next-level stuff.

Mediterranean Diet Pros

The Mediterranean diet is one of the most robustly studied therapeutic diets.

But unlike many diets, it wasn't developed based on a hypothesis of what *should* work. Nor did it become popular because an influencer "got great results on it."

The Mediterranean diet rose to prominence based on **what lots of *real* people were already eating and doing**.

The original followers of the Mediterranean diet weren't "on a diet" at all—they were just living their lives. That means it's been shown to be a **sustainable, long-term approach** for a very large number of people.

Now let's take a look at the specific health benefits it provides.

The Mediterranean diet may lower your risk of chronic diseases.

It's associated with lowered incidences of:

► Cardiovascular disease

The Lyon Heart Health study, which involved 605 patients with heart disease, tested the Mediterranean diet against a control therapeutic diet. After four years, those on the Mediterranean diet had a **50-75 percent reduced risk of another heart attack**.⁸

The Mediterranean dieters also consumed more fiber, vitamin C, and omega 3s, and less saturated fat and

cholesterol than those on the control diet.

► Diabetes

The Mediterranean diet is associated with improving blood sugar regulation, as well as a **19-23 percent reduced risk of future diabetes risk**. So, adopting a Mediterranean diet may help prevent type 2 diabetes.⁹

For those with established diabetes, a lower carbohydrate version of the Mediterranean-style diet seems to help control blood sugar.

► Angina

A Mediterranean diet rich in alpha-linoleic acid (plant-based omega-3s) and plant sterols—primarily from nuts, seeds, and plant oils—**helps reduce the severity of angina**.^{10 11}

► Alzheimer's disease

In a study of 1188 healthy elderly Americans, those who adhered closely to a Mediterranean-style diet had a **32-40 percent reduced risk of Alzheimer's**.¹²

The risk of Alzheimer's was reduced even further (67 percent less likely to develop the disease) with more exercise and a more consistent Mediterranean eating pattern.

► Cancer

The Mediterranean diet **may contribute to a reduced risk of cancer**, possibly due to a predominance of foods rich in antioxidants and fiber. And, according to some research, the closer people stick to the Mediterranean diet, the lower their likelihood of a cancer diagnosis.^{13 14 15}

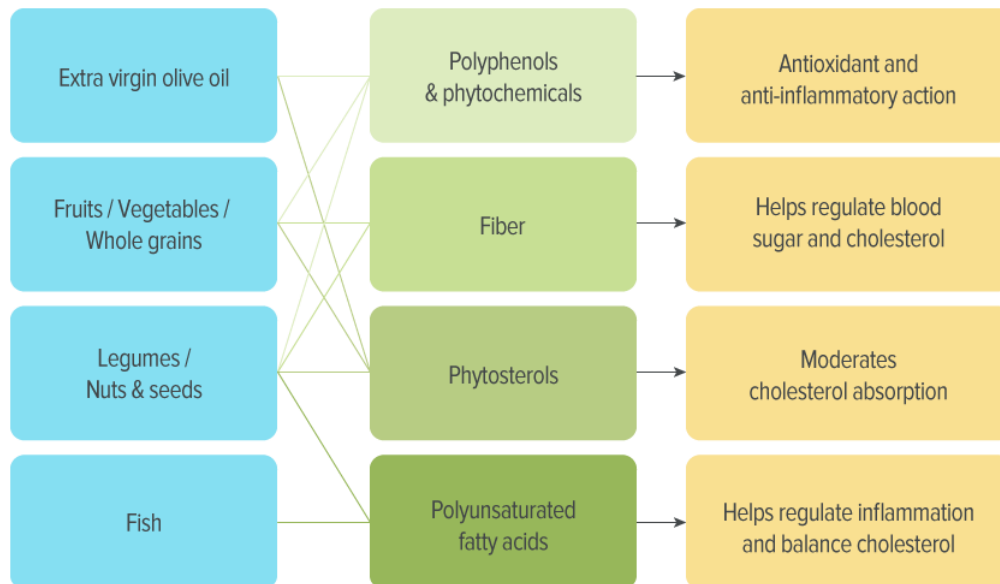
► Erectile dysfunction

Men who followed the Mediterranean diet for two years had **fewer symptoms of erectile dysfunction (ED)**—as well as improved blood vessel function and lower markers of inflammation—compared to those on a control diet.¹⁶

The Mediterranean diet may help reduce ED by reducing the risk of metabolic syndrome, a major risk factor for ED.¹⁷

In addition to (or perhaps because of) reducing the risk of many diseases **the Mediterranean diet is also associated with a longer lifespan**.¹⁸

MEDITERRANEAN DIET FOODS AND THEIR BENEFITS



Adapted from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31480794/>

The Mediterranean diet isn't about eliminating "bad foods."

Instead, it's about eating a delicious range of foods that most people enjoy—without prohibiting anything.

Think: "inclusion" not "avoidance."

For example, sweets aren't eaten regularly, but they're not "forbidden" either. They're just treats—to be enjoyed on occasion (and hopefully with lots of gusto and pleasure).

This means that the diet is practical, flexible, and psychologically, kind of freeing. Not surprisingly, research shows this kind of approach often leads to better results.¹⁹

And indeed: **The Mediterranean diet appears to be one of the easier diets to stick to.**

In a study of 250 people that compared long-term dietary adherence, 57 percent of people on the Mediterranean diet were still following it after a year, compared to 35 percent of people who tried the Paleo diet.²⁰

Mediterranean Diet Cons

Most diets have *some* drawbacks, usually related to what they restrict. This often makes them psychologically or nutritionally challenging—or both.

Because **the Mediterranean diet is inclusive of so many foods**, it doesn't provoke either of these challenges.

But there are other reasons why the Mediterranean diet may not be the “perfect” approach. (And to be clear: There is no perfect diet.)

Not everyone agrees on what the Mediterranean diet is.

Because the Mediterranean diet wasn’t purposely created by a group of doctors, dietitians, or scientists, it doesn’t come with strict rules. It’s more of a “pattern” of eating.

For example, if someone’s following a gluten-free diet or a vegan diet, you can assume that gluten-containing or animal foods are eliminated.

But with the Mediterranean diet, **nothing’s really excluded**.

Ultimately, there’s just a focus on particular foods—such as olive oil, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, and seafood.

For some, these fuzzy borders can make the Mediterranean diet *seem* more complicated than it is.

Case in point: If a person likes clearly-defined rules and precise meal plans, the Mediterranean diet might feel really challenging.

What makes the Mediterranean diet great can also make it hard.

Traditional Mediterraneans don’t tend to eat a lot of red meat (because the region lacks the land to raise cattle). To be clear, though, this isn’t an indictment of red meat.

It’s simply cause-and-effect: They eat fresh foods that are available locally, which we’d consider a “core principle” of the diet.

That might *sound* ideal, but **it can be problematic for many people**.

If fresh food is either inaccessible or unaffordable, following a “true” Mediterranean diet may not be practical (or possible). Same goes for someone who feels like they don’t have time or energy to prepare nutritious meals.

The Mediterranean diet may not be the *best* choice for weight loss (unless you combine it with other strategies).

People who start following a Mediterranean diet *do* typically lose weight.

This is interesting because:

Restriction—of food groups or calories in general—isn’t a central principle of the Mediterranean diet.

When people lose weight on the Mediterranean diet without attempting to modify portions, it’s probably due to something known as **dietary displacement**.

In other words, calorie-dense, highly-processed foods—for example, pastries, soda, and chips—are “crowded out” by lower-calorie, higher-nutrient whole foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins.

While whole foods are hard to overeat, highly-processed foods are basically *designed* for overeating.

So when switching to a more whole foods diet, you *may* eat fewer calories—without even trying to.

However, if you're set on losing a specific amount of weight, you're better off using an intentional strategy than relying on it happening by accident.

Our advice?

Combine the **healthy variety of foods** the diet promotes, as well as the lifestyle factors—like **movement and mindful eating**—with intentional **portion regulation**.

Red wine: What's the actual deal?

Is red wine *good* for you?

Meaning: If you're not already drinking red wine, should you start?

As with most nutrition debates, it's complicated.

The benefit of red wine potentially comes from its abundance of phenolic compounds, which are plant chemicals with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. (Note: These compounds are 10 times higher in red wines than in white or rosé wines.)

Moderate consumption of red wine is associated with lower blood pressure²¹, higher levels of “good” HDL cholesterol, lower levels of “bad” LDL cholesterol, lower blood sugar, and lower levels of inflammation. (Alcohol also acts as a blood thinner, which may be helpful for preventing clots.)^{22 23}

For cardioprotective effects, international guidelines suggest limiting red wine to about 5 ounces (150 mL) a day. Drink more than that, and the health benefits fade. Higher alcohol consumption is associated with *higher* blood pressure, *more* inflammation, and *worsened* blood sugar regulation, not to mention an overall increased risk for many chronic diseases.²⁴

The verdict?

If you delight in the occasional glass of red wine with dinner, you probably don't need to stop.

However, **if you're a non-drinker, most health experts recommend that you don't start.**

Besides, there are less controversial foods that are *even better* sources of phenolic compounds, such as many culinary herbs and spices, teas, berries, and olives.²⁵

(If only a cocktail of oregano, cloves, green tea, elderberries, and black olives were more appealing...)

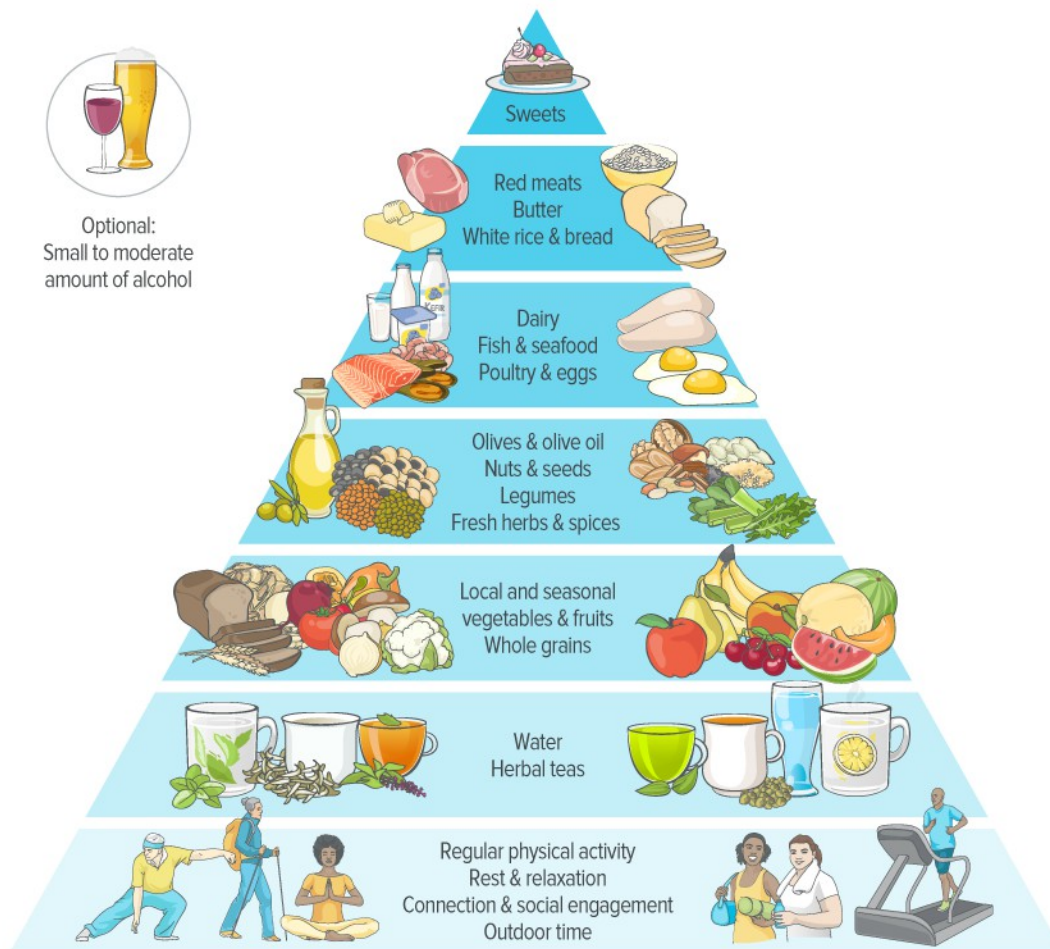
The Mediterranean diet: What to eat

Traditionally, the Mediterranean plate includes:

- A high proportion of vegetables and fruits
- A high proportion of whole grains

- A moderate proportion of protein from seafood, legumes, poultry, eggs, and Greek yogurt
- A moderate proportion of fats from nuts, seeds, olives / olive oil, and fresh and aged cheeses
- A low proportion of animal-derived fats like lard and butter
- A low proportion of protein from red meat
- A very low proportion of sweets and desserts

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET FOOD AND LIFESTYLE PYRAMID



Please keep in mind: **There is no one-size-fits-all Mediterranean diet.**

Mediterranean diet: Does it work—for you?

There's really only one proven way to know if the Mediterranean diet works for you:

Try it.

Treat it like an experiment. Go all in—for at least two weeks.

Then, after at least 2 weeks, decide if your eating strategy is working, and then evaluate how it all went? Did it work? Do you look, feel, and perform better?

Based on what you learn from your experiment, either stay the course, make some changes to improve your success, or abandon the mission.

No matter your results, remember this: It's *all* okay.

Keep experimenting with new foods, new strategies, and new eating styles. Adopt what works. Drop six what doesn't.

Eventually, you'll discover what diet works best—for YOU.

Proven strategies to help you get (and keep) the body you want... more easily than ever before.

For a **customized Mediterranean diet nutrition plan** that includes how much protein, carbs, fat you should eat, check out [the Guide to Healthy Eating](#). It gives you a nutrition blueprint for achieving your goals and, at the same time, helps you develop the skills you need to eat well for life.

You will also receive a complete Mediterranean diet food list to choosing the best Mediterranean diet foods for your body. Using this food list—a visual guide to Mediterranean eating—you'll consider how you could move along a spectrum, starting from your current eating pattern to choices that are more Mediterranean-aligned.

Just slight shifts toward the “eat more” foods and away from many of the “eat less” foods can make an enormous difference.

How do we know?

We’ve seen it happen with client after client after client.

And if you decide the Mediterranean diet just isn’t for you? That’s okay.

It’s not the only eating style around.

There are many other ways to eat well—**keto, Paleo, vegetarian, fully plant-based (vegan)**, or consider **trying the “anything” diet (Yes, you can eat “anything.”)**—that can also help you reach your goals.

Receive the guidance and support you deserve.

Use code **DIETGUIDE-50OFF** at checkout
to save \$50 off the Guide to Healthy Eating



SIGN UP TODAY!

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