

MEDITERRANEAN DIET

The Mediterranean diet refers to a heart-healthy eating pattern that includes common foods eaten in Greece, Spain, Southern Italy and other countries near the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean diet is rich in dietary fiber, monounsaturated fat and omega-3 fatty acids while low in saturated fat. Some research suggests that following the Mediterranean diet may result in a more stable blood sugar level, lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, dementia, and other health problems. Note that this eating plan is not designed for weight loss as it emphasizes plenty of “healthy fats” from nuts, seeds, and their oils.

Due to the limited amount of red meat and dairy products on this diet, iron and calcium intake may not be enough. It is recommended to eat more plant-based foods high in iron and calcium, such as leafy green vegetables (e.g. spinach, broccoli, kale, bok choy, etc.) and dry beans (e.g. soy bean, black bean, kidney bean, etc.), along with the foods high in vitamin C (e.g. papaya, orange, tomato, peppers, etc.) to improve iron absorption.



Principles of Mediterranean diet

1. Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables daily, such as olives, spinach, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, broccoli, potatoes, figs, grapes, blueberries, beans, lentils, and chickpeas.
2. Eat some nuts daily, such as almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts.
3. Eat mostly whole grains daily, such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, oats, whole wheat pasta, and couscous (made from crushed wheat).
4. Prepare foods mainly with unsaturated fat, such as olive oil, canola oil, soybean oil, and flaxseed oil.
5. Flavor foods with herbs and spices instead of salt, sauces and gravies.
6. Eat fish or seafood at least twice a week, such as salmon, tuna, lake trout, mackerel, sardines and herring.
7. Eat moderate amounts of low-fat dairy products daily or weekly, such as 1% or fat-free milk, low-fat cheese and fat-free yogurt.
8. Eat moderate amounts of poultry every other day or weekly.
9. Eat eggs less than four times a week.
10. Limit red meat (beef, pork, lamb) and saturated fats, such as palm oil, coconut oil, butter, whole milk dairy products and other animal fats, to only a few times a month.
11. Limit sweets, desserts, and sugary drinks to only a few times a week.
12. Include moderate amounts of wine, no more than 5 oz for women and 10 oz for men daily.