

# Healthful Eating, Mediterranean Style

What You Can Learn From This Handout...

► Mediterranean-style food choices ► Benefits of Mediterranean-style eating ► Tips for healthful eating

*I heard about the Mediterranean diet in the news. What is it?*

It isn't a diet at all. Many people in Spain, Italy, and other Mediterranean countries have eaten what is known as a *Mediterranean-style diet* for centuries. The food choices generally include:

**High amounts of olive oil, fruit, nuts, legumes, seeds, vegetables, beans, grains (such as bread, pasta, and rice), and herbs and spices**

*Eaten at each meal*



**Medium amounts of fish and seafood**

*Eaten often, at least two times per week*



**Medium-to-low amounts of poultry, eggs, cheese, and yogurt**

*Eaten in reasonable amounts, from every day to once per week*



**Low amounts of meat and sweets**

*Eaten less often*



Wine with meals (in reasonable amounts)



Mediterranean-style eating is about more than just the food that you eat and enjoying meals with family and friends are important parts of Mediterranean-style eating. Physical activity such as a walk after a meal is important as well.

## What are the benefits of Mediterranean-style eating?

Mediterranean-style eating can help to lower your risk of heart diseases, such as stroke or heart attack. The food choices in this style of eating may also help to prevent certain types of cancer, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's disease.

An added bonus: Mediterranean-style eating may also help you to lose weight because the amount of food that you eat is limited, food is savored and not eaten on-the-run, and activity is encouraged.

## Aren't olive oil and nuts high in fat? Isn't fat supposed to be bad for you?

There are two important points to know when talking about the fat in food. One is the type of fat and the other is the amount of fat. Large amounts of even healthy fats may lead to weight gain.

*Saturated fats* and *trans fats* are found in animal sources of food, such as meat or dairy products. *Trans fats* are also found in packaged cookies and cakes. It is best to limit foods that contain saturated or *trans fats*. These types of fats can increase *low-density lipoprotein cholesterol*, or LDL-C, the "bad" cholesterol, and decrease *high-density lipoprotein cholesterol*, or HDL-C, the "good" cholesterol.

The fats found in olive oil and nuts are *monounsaturated fats* or *polyunsaturated fats*. These are types of healthy fats that do not raise LDL-Cholesterol. Keep in mind that although nuts and olive oil have healthy fats, they also are high in calories, and should be eaten in reasonable amounts.

## What are some general tips for healthful eating?

- Plan out your meals and snacks for each week in advance. If your food closet is stocked to help you eat healthful meals and snacks, you will be more likely to make healthful food choices.
- Try a new fruit or vegetable every week. You may discover a new favorite food!
- Buy bagged salads or pre-cut fruit and vegetables to save on time preparing a meal so that you have more time to sit, savor, and enjoy your meal.
- Use olive or canola oil for cooking instead of butter or use small amounts of both.
- You can enjoy small amounts of almost all foods.
- Meet with a registered dietitian. A dietitian can guide you toward more healthful food choices that fit your culture and lifestyle.

Which of these healthful foods have you eaten in the past week? Put a check mark next to foods that you would like to add to your routine.

- Olive oil
- Fruit
- Nuts
- Vegetables
- Seeds, legumes, and beans
- Bread, pasta, and rice
- Fish and seafood



FOR MORE INFORMATION  
TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER  
OR VISIT [WWW.NDEI.ORG](http://WWW.NDEI.ORG)

**REFERENCES** Oldways. Mediterranean Diet Pyramid. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/d422gifo> • Mayo Clinic. Dietary fats: know which types to choose. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/42osfwp> • Mayo Clinic. Mediterranean diet: choose this heart-healthy diet option. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6ayebq>. All websites accessed February 26, 2013.



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