

Mediterranean Diet - Summary & Chart

Changing from a Western to a Mediterranean diet can greatly reduce the chance of developing heart disease, cancer and other diseases. This summary leaflet includes a checklist of ingredients to eat, on a day-to-day basis, if wishing to make the change.

The Mediterranean Diet

A quick summary:

Mediterranean Diet - Overall

Examples	The Mediterranean Diet is based on a traditional mix of foodstuffs eaten by peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean - particularly Crete and southern Italy.
Also	The diet has been tested in Western industrialised countries such as the UK and USA.
Analysis	High in fruit, vegetables, legumes and cereals. Fish and white meat mainly eaten in place of red meat. Mono-unsaturated oils used in place of saturated animal fats. Moderate red wine intake with meals.
Benefits	Exceptional reductions in risk of early death, heart disease, cancer and chronic conditions such as hypertension, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes. Also, reductions in Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease risk. Adoption of the diet has proved a successful strategy for healthy weight reduction.
Risk in Excess	The Mediterranean Diet maximises the intake of health-promoting ingredients, whilst minimising quantities of ingredients associated with health risks. Those adopting the Mediterranean Diet are likely to have a lower risk of disease than those who don't.

For further details of research, diet ingredients and health benefits, see separate leaflets called '*How to follow the Mediterranean Diet*' and '*Health Benefits of the Mediterranean Diet*'.

Adopting the Mediterranean Diet - general principles

Changes to make when converting from a Western to a Mediterranean diet:

- Maximise your intake of vegetables, legumes, fruits and whole grain cereals.
- Limit your red meat intake - fish and poultry are healthy substitutes.
- Where possible, use mono-unsaturated olive oil or rapeseed oil in place of animal fat such as butter or lard.
- Limit your intake of highly processed 'fast foods' and 'ready meals', where you cannot tell saturated fat and salt intake.

- Eat no more than moderate amounts of dairy products, and preferably low-fat ones.
- Do not add salt to your food at the table - there is already plenty there.
- Snack on fruit, dried fruit and unsalted nuts rather than cakes, crisps and biscuits.
- Drink (red) wine during meals, but no more than three small glasses per day if you are a man and no more than two small glasses per day if you are a woman.
- Water is the best 'non-alcoholic beverage' (as opposed to sugary drinks), although health benefits have also been claimed for various teas and coffee.

The conversion can be made gradually, but it's a good idea to set yourself targets.

Food quantities to aim for

Scientific research has shown the closer individuals can follow an 'ideal' Mediterranean diet, the greater the health advantage.

If you'd like to try the full Mediterranean Diet at home, we've created the following handy tick-chart of foods to be consumed on a weekly basis, when following a scientifically tested 'ideal' Mediterranean diet (as used by the author).

Strict Mediterranean Diet - Individual Weekly Portion Count														
Name:						Week:								
Red Meat	Sweets	Eggs	Potatoes	Legumes, Nuts, Olives	Poultry	Fish	Dairy	Olive oil	Fruits	Vegetables	Bread, Pasta, Rice	(Red) Wine	Serving count	
								Use olive oil or rapeseed oil as main added or cooking fat				m/f	1	
													m/f	2
													m/f	3
													m/f	4
													m/f	5
													m/f	6
													m/f	7
													m/f	8
													m/f	9
													m/f	10
													m/f	11
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													m/f	13
													m/f	14
													m	15
													m	16
													m	17
													m	18
													m	19
													m	20
													m	21
													safe adult max for male (m) /female (f)	22
														23
														24
														25
														26
														27
														28
restricted	restricted	restricted	restricted		restricted	see leaflet text for special cases	restricted							

Chart shows food type portion targets to aim for. Those without restriction can be exceeded. See accompanying bullet-point guide for portion sizes. If you know your body reacts badly to one or more foods eg nuts, milk, gluten - then you should avoid them.

The following is a guide to the portions referred to in the tick-chart:

- *Vegetables*: a cup of raw leafy vegetables or half a cup of other vegetables.
- *Potatoes*: 100 g.
- *Legumes*: one cup (100 g) of cooked dry beans.

- *Nuts*: 30 g. Eat as a snack or sprinkle on food for added taste.
- *Fruit*: one apple, banana, one orange, 200 g of melon or watermelon, 30 g of grapes.
- *Meat*: 60 g of cooked lean meat or fish.
- *Grains*: half a cup (50-60 g) of cooked pasta or rice; one slice of bread (25 g).
- *Dairy*: one cup of milk or yoghurt; 30 g of cheese.
- *Eggs*: 1 egg.
- *Wine*: 125 ml glass of average strength red wine.

It is the author's experience, that using the tick-chart for several weeks helps educate the eyes and palate in what to buy and cook, as well as what to avoid on restaurant menus and TV cookery programmes. So, over time, the healthy Mediterranean Diet can become a natural part of your way of life and, indeed, part of you. It's probably the closest science can currently get to a 'user guide' for fuelling the human machine.