

Integrated Health Concepts

28 Midway Street • Bristol, TN 37620 • (423) 573-9873



Mediterranean Diet

Introduction

- The Mediterranean diet is inspired by the habits of Greece, Southern Italy, and Spain in the 1940s and 1950s.
- Research states that this diet can reduce risk of heart disease, lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the ‘bad’ cholesterol that is more likely to build up in your arteries), can reduce risk of cancer, Parkinson’s, and Alzheimer’s diseases.

Key Components from Mayo Clinic:

The Mediterranean diet emphasizes:

- Eating primarily plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts (organic as possible: clean 15 versus dirty dozen)
- Replacing butter with healthy fats such as olive oil and canola oil (extra virgin = involves the least processing, which is what we want.)
- Using herbs and spices **instead of** salt to flavor foods
- **Limiting red meat to no more than a few times a month**
- Eating fish and poultry at least twice a week
- Enjoying meals with family and friends
- Drinking red wine in moderation. No more than 5 ounces daily for women and no more than 10 ounces daily for men under 65. (Alcohol intake is option and not required.)
- Getting plenty of exercise

Ideas to Get You Started:

- **Plant based foods:** strive for 7 to 10 servings a day of fruits and veggies.
 - **Grains:** majority should be whole grains such as wheat, oats, rice, rye, barley, corn, farro, and couscous. Try to consume minimally processed versions because refining and processing can remove vital nutrients and minerals.
 - **Vegetables:** artichokes, arugula, beets, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, collard greens, chicory, eggplant, fennel, kale, keeks, lettuce, mache, mushrooms, okra, onions, peas, peppers, potatoes, spinach, sweet potatoes, zucchini, etc.

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- **Fruits:** apples, apricots (fresh – NOT dried), avocados, cherries, clementines, dates, figs, grapefruits, grapes, melons, nectarines, olives, oranges, peaches, pears, pomegranates, strawberries, tomatoes, etc.
- **Nuts, seeds, beans, and legumes:** almonds, cannellini beans, chickpeas, cashews, fava beans, green beans, hazelnuts, kidney beans, lentils, pine nuts, sesame seeds, split peas, tahini sauce, walnuts, etc.
 - **NOTE:** Nuts are an excellent source of healthy fats and therefore are high in calories. Be aware of serving sizes. Typically, a handful a day is enough.
- **Herbs and spices:** anise, basil, bay leaf, chilies, cloves, cumin, fennel, garlic, lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, pepper, rosemary, sage, tarragon, thyme, etc.
 - **NOTE:** Buying spices can be pricey – some stores have “bag your own spices” section where you can pay a fraction of the price compared to prepackaged jars. This way you can try out different spices before committing. Earth Fare offers this option, but feel free to call your local grocer and ask.
- **Cheese and yogurt:** to be enjoyed in low to moderate amounts. Aim for low to no fat in your dairy products: skim milk, fat free yogurt, and low fat cheese. Brie, chevre, corvo, feta, haloumi, manchego, ricotta, Greek yogurt, etc.
- **Fish and shellfish:** (NOT fried or battered – think baked, roasted, grilled, etc.) Clams, crab, eel, flounder, lobster, mackerel, mussels, octopus, oysters, salmon, sardines, sea bass, shrimp, squid, tilapia, tuna, whelk, yellowtail, etc.
- **Meats:** substitute fish and poultry for red meat. When red meat is consumed, make sure it’s lean (90% lean or more is a sound choice) and appropriately portioned (about the size of a deck of cards.) Try to **AVOID** high fat meats such as bacon and sausage.

Okay... But How Do I Actually Do That?

Fear not! Instead of focusing on the foods you shouldn’t eat, change your mindset to exploring new foods and meal combinations. A typical day could look like:

- Breakfast: oatmeal with fruit and nuts. Prepare the oats with ½ cup skim milk and ½ cup water and top with slices strawberries and walnuts.
- A.M. snack: two clementines

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- Lunch: leafy green salad with cucumbers, tomatoes, 1 Tbsp. feta cheese, chickpeas, and for dressing combine ½ Tbsp. each of extra-virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar.
- P.M. Snack: small serving of nuts and a serving of fresh fruit
- Dinner: roasted salmon with fennel and couscous

Or:

- Breakfast: egg and avocado toast and a clementine
- A.M. snack: small serving of nuts
- Lunch: green salad with pita bread and hummus (top with lots of veggies to keep you full)
- P.M. snack: non-fat plain Greek yogurt and fresh fruit
- Dinner: tomato and artichoke gnocchi (type of pasta – pronounced “no-key”) with leafy green salad with fresh veggies.

The Mediterranean Diet is grounded on the principles of enjoyment and pleasure. Foods, drinks and meals are best eaten with others, when possible, and savored.

Resources:

- Mediterranean diet: A heart-healthy eating plan:
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet/art-20047801?pg=1>
- Traditional Med Diet:
<https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet/traditional-med-diet>