



## Eating and Living the Heart-Healthy Way

### The Mediterranean Way to Eat: A Heart-Healthy Plan

If you're looking for a heart-healthy eating plan, the Mediterranean diet incorporates the basics of healthy eating reflecting the traditional cooking style of countries on the Mediterranean Sea. Most healthy diets include fruits, vegetables, fish and whole grains, and limit unhealthy fats. However, some differences in amounts of certain foods may make a difference in your risk of heart disease.



### Benefits of the Mediterranean Diet

Research has shown that the traditional “Med diet” reduces the risk of heart disease. The diet has been associated with a lower level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol) that's more likely to build up deposits in your arteries.

A large study of more than 1.5 million healthy adults showed that following a “Med diet” helped reduce the risk of heart disease and death rates. The “diet” has also shown to reduce the incidence of cancer, and Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. Women who follow the “Med diet” with added extra-virgin olive oil and mixed nuts may have a reduced risk of breast cancer.

For these reasons, scientific organizations around the world encourage adults to adapt a style of eating like that of the “Med diet” for the prevention of major chronic diseases.

### Fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains

The “Med diet” traditionally includes fruits, vegetables, pasta and rice. For example, residents of



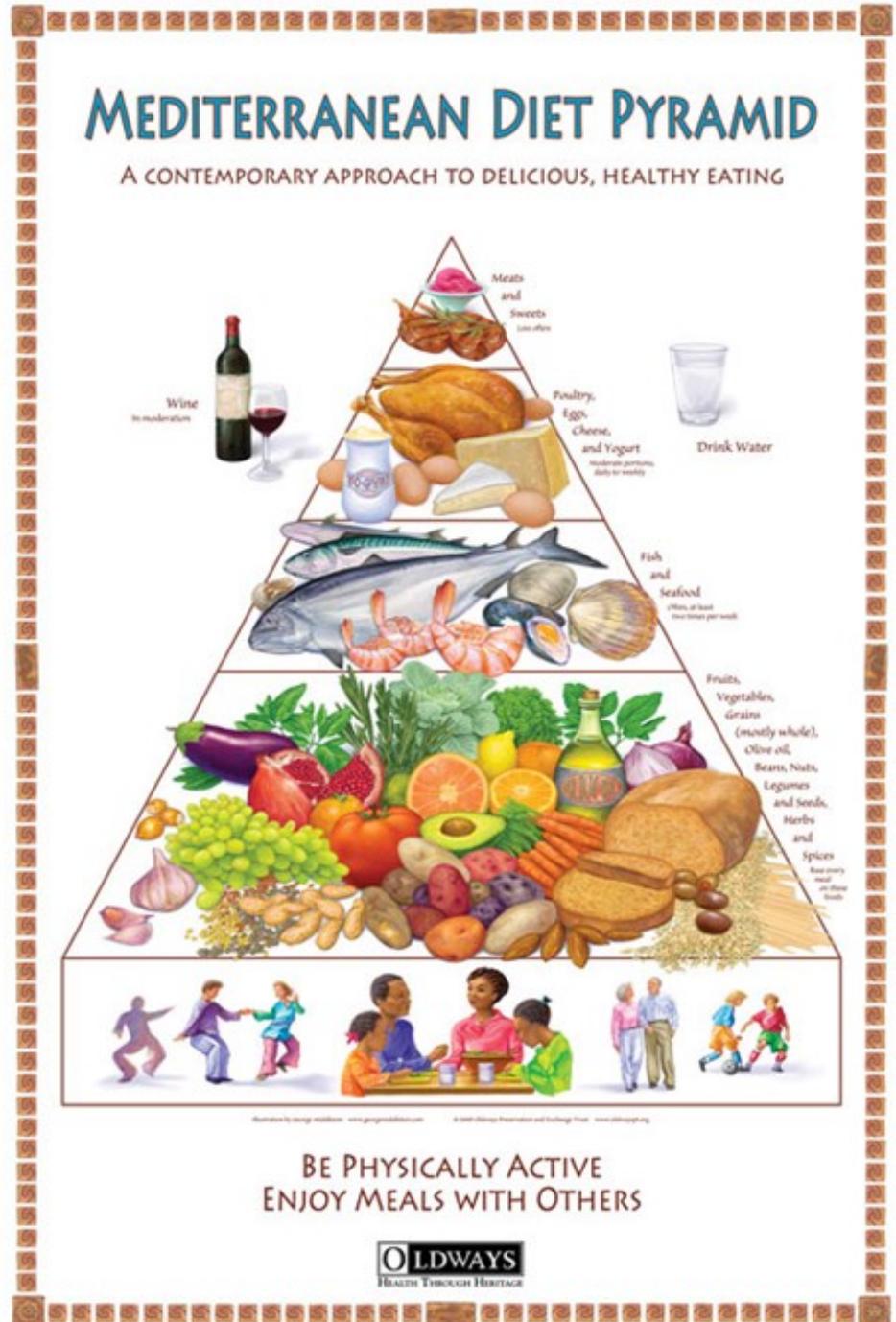
Greece eat very little red meat and average nine servings a day of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables. Grains in the Mediterranean region are usually whole grain and contain very few unhealthy trans fats. Throughout this region bread is eaten plain or dipped in olive oil (flavored with herbs) instead of using butter or margarines, which contain saturated and/or trans fats. Try it!

Peanut butter or other nut butters are good alternatives as well. Speaking of nuts and seeds, although high in fat, most of the fat is not saturated. Generally, eat no more than a handful a day and avoid candied or honey-roasted and heavily salted nuts.

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## Here it is in a Nutshell!

- **The majority of your meals would include fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.**
- **Eat nuts** like almonds, cashews, pistachios and walnuts for snacks or add to salads and cereals. Choose natural peanut or tahini butter (blended sesame seeds) or hummus (ground chick peas) as a dip or spread for bread and crackers.
- **Use herbs and spices, and salt-free blends** rather than salt.
- **Eat fish 1-2 times a week.** Fresh or water-packed tuna, trout, salmon, mackerel, sardines, and herring are healthy choices.
- **Limit red meats to once a week.** Substitute with fish and poultry, nuts, seeds, and beans. Use lean meats and keep portions small (palm of your hand or three ounces). Also avoid sausage, bacon and other high-fat meats.
- **Choose low-fat dairy.** Limit higher fat dairy products such as whole or 2% milk, cheese and ice cream. Switch to skim milk, fat-free yogurt and low-fat cheese.



**Oils, no butter.** The focus isn't on limiting total fat in your diet, but the types of fat you eat. Olive oil is the primary source of fat. It provides monounsaturated fat, which can help reduce LDL cholesterol (“bad cholesterol”) levels when used in place of saturated or trans fats. Mono- and poly-unsaturated fats, such as canola oil and some nuts, contain linolenic acid (a type of omega-3 fatty acid). These lower triglycerides, decrease blood clotting, are associated with decreased sudden heart attack, improve the health of your blood vessels, and help moderate blood pressure. Fatty fish, such as mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna and salmon, are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

- **A glass of wine.** If it's OK with your doctor, have a glass of wine at dinner. Alcohol, in moderation, has been associated with a reduced risk of heart disease in some research studies. The “Med diet” includes 5 ounces of wine daily for women (any age) and for men over age 65, 10 ounces for men under age 65.



## Breakfast 1-2-3 Plan

### A Heart-Healthy Start to Your Day

Enjoying a nutritious breakfast not only gets your day off to a good start, but as studies show, can reduce the risk of coronary disease. A good breakfast includes whole grains, and fruit, along with eggs, milk, or yogurt or some other source of protein. Use this 1-2-3 plan to build your own healthy breakfast. Choose one item from each category (1-2-3) every day).

1

For your whole grains, you could pick one bread and one spread:

**Bread** (1-2 ounces)

Whole grain toast  
Whole grain bagel  
Whole grain pita  
Whole grain English muffin

**Spread** (1-2 tablespoons)

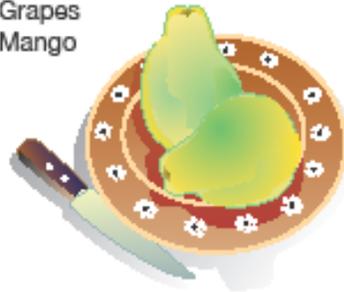
Peanut (or any nut) butter  
Hummus  
Soft cheese  
Guacamole

Or, eat cereal. Enjoy your whole grains in the form of oatmeal or your favorite cold whole grain cereal, about ½ to 1 cup, with about the same amount of milk, yogurt, or soy or nut milk.

2

Pick your favorite fruit—a small to medium whole fruit, or about ½ to 1 cup cut up fruit. Actual fruit will satisfy you better than fruit juice. Pick your favorites, according to the season!

|          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| Apples   | Melon     |
| Bananas  | Oranges   |
| Berries  | Peaches   |
| Cherries | Pears     |
| Figs     | Pineapple |
| Grapes   |           |
| Mango    |           |



3

Add an egg, yogurt, or a handful of nuts to help your breakfast stick with you until lunch time. Some quick ideas:

Walnuts, almonds or other nuts – as many as can fit in your cupped hand

Yogurt – buy plain Greek or regular, and add your own fruit or flavorings

Hard-cooked eggs – make several ahead, to last the week  
Lowfat milk, or soy or nut milk – on its own, or with your cereal  
Soft-cooked or scrambled egg – surprisingly quick

— Coffee, tea, or water top off the meal.—

## Breakfast Ideas



### Non-traditional

Remember, breakfast doesn't have to be limited to traditional breakfast foods. If you want to warm up some soup, or enjoy a big plate of roasted vegetables for breakfast, be our guest!

### Grain Leftovers

Here's one idea: If you have extra grains (bulgur, farro, brown rice or any other whole grain) left over from dinner, warm them up with a little milk, cinnamon, honey, and fruit. You'll find it makes an unexpectedly delicious and satisfying breakfast.



## Other Heart Healthy Habits to Think About

- **Eating together.** It helps to enjoy your meals with family and friends whenever you can. Attend a nutrition program meal at the cafes.
- **Exercise** as much as you can, when you can, whatever you can do.
- **Get at least 7 hours.** Too little sleep may take a toll on your heart, especially if you are already at risk for heart disease, a study in the Journal of the American Heart Association suggests.
- **Try to deal with stress.** Researchers found that having a history of financial concerns was linked to a twofold increase in heart attack risk in women. Coping with the death of a loved one or a life-threatening illness could also increase women's chances of a heart attack. Scientists don't know how stressful life events contribute to heart attack, but increased levels of inflammation and cortisol (a stress hormone) might play a part.
- **Hostility can have negative effects on a woman's heart,** and a 2016 study may have figured out how this happens. Previous studies found that higher levels of hostility in women was linked with an increased risk for heart disease, while optimistic women had a lower risk for heart disease.
- **Meditation** may play a role in reducing your risk of heart disease, a 2017 review from the American Heart Association suggests. Learn some deep breathing exercises.
- **Eating a good breakfast is a good habit to get into.** People in a Spanish study that did not usually eat a good breakfast were more likely to have other unfavorable eating habits, were overweight, smoked cigarettes, and drank too much.



### Resources:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/mediterranean-diet/art-20047801>

<https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>

<https://www.livescience.com/60718-new-ways-to-keep-heart-healthy.html>

**Consumer-centered access for  
long-term care information,  
referrals and assessments.**

**For information,  
call 382-8481, #9, ext.304**



**NY Connects**  
Your Link to Long Term  
Services and Supports

### **Do you have a questions or concerns about what to eat?**

If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County's Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible to have a free consultation with a Registered Dietitian.

Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 518-372-1622, ext. 269. Leave a message, if necessary, for dietitian to call you back.

### **Check out our website for nutrition resources:**

**<http://ccschenectady.org/nutrition-for-seniors>**

Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services denies no person services or access to service based upon race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status and/or handicapping conditions. Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services is primarily funded with County tax dollars. Supplemental funding is through the New York State Office for the Aging under Title III-B/D, III-C-1, III-C-2, III-F of the Federal Older Americans Act, and New York State Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly Act (CSE), Congregate Services Initiative (CSI), and the Wellness In Nutrition (WIN).

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