

Why Choose a Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern?

The Mediterranean-style eating pattern is one way to eat heart-healthy. It can help you lower your cholesterol levels and triglyceride levels, and improve your blood pressure, which can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. Research has shown that 30% percent of heart attacks, strokes, and deaths from heart disease can be prevented in high-risk people if they follow a Mediterranean-style eating pattern that has extra-virgin olive oil or unsalted nuts.



The Basics of Mediterranean-Style Eating

A Mediterranean-style eating pattern reflects the diet of people who live near the Mediterranean Sea. Foods that you can include in a Mediterranean-style eating pattern are a variety of fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, fish, and shellfish. Choose chicken and turkey over red meats. Use healthy fats, like olive oil, as your main oil, and eat unsalted nuts and seeds. Limit sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages. If you drink alcohol, have low to moderate amounts and consume with meals.

A Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern

Eat lots of vegetables. Fill at least $\frac{1}{2}$ your plate with a variety of brightly colored vegetables — either steamed, grilled, or raw.

Switch to fiber-rich whole grains.

Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with brown and wild rice, barley, bulgur, or quinoa. Choose whole-grain breads and cereals, including oats. Use whole-grain flour in baking instead of white flour.

For dessert, eat fruit. Choose a variety — fresh, dried, and frozen with no added sugar.

Enjoy some dairy products. Add non-fat or low-fat yogurt to meals and snacks. Choose skim or 1% milk. Use only small amounts of low-fat cheese.

Use healthy fats. Use extra-virgin olive oil in cooking and salads. Enjoy an ounce of raw nuts or seeds each day.



Enjoy meatless meals at least one night a week.

On meatless days, build your meals around legumes (beans and lentils) used in casseroles, chili, soups, and salads.

Include seafood at least twice per week. Choose fish high in omega-3 fatty acids like tuna, salmon, and sardines.

Choose smaller portions of meat.

Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with skinless chicken or turkey. Choose only lean cuts of beef and pork. Prepare all meats low in fat by grilling, baking, or broiling. Limit processed meats.

Eating a Mediterranean-Style Diet is Easy. A sample day may be:

- **Breakfast:** Low-sugar granola topped with plain Greek yogurt, fresh berries, walnuts, and ground flax seeds. Include unsweetened coffee or tea for a beverage.
- **Lunch:** Whole-wheat pita bread with hummus, romaine lettuce, olives, tomatoes with balsamic vinegar and olive oil, and a fresh apple. Choose a calorie-free beverage.
- **Snack:** Raw almonds and seeds, fresh, raw cut-up vegetables.
- **Dinner:** Salmon fillet on a bed of quinoa with olive oil, garlic, lemon, and herbs; a spinach salad with strawberries, pecans, olives, balsamic vinegar, and olive oil. Calorie-free beverage or alcohol, if desired.
- **Dessert:** Cut-up seasonal fresh fruit and serve with plain yogurt.

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey. Talk with an RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.