

Mediterranean Eating Plan for Better Heart Health



A Mediterranean diet is a heart-healthy eating plan based on traditional foods of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Following this diet can reduce your risk of heart disease and support healthy aging. It is no surprise why so many people are skipping the American diet in favor of Mediterranean!

How It Works

Eat mostly plant-based foods

Enjoy plenty of vegetables and fruits. Choose a rainbow of colors. Legumes such as beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds are a main source of protein.

Go fresh

Eat fresh, local, and in-season foods. When choosing frozen or canned foods, stay away from added sauces, sodium (salt) or sugar. Eat less processed foods.

Choose whole grains

Not all grains are the same. At least half the servings of grains you eat each day should be whole grains. Enjoy whole-wheat pasta and bread, plus brown rice, barley, oatmeal, shredded wheat cereal, or popcorn. Eat less of refined grains such as white rice and items made from white wheat (pastries, pasta or bread).

Eat more fish

Eat fish more often than meat and poultry. Try oily fish like salmon, sardines or tuna.

Choose healthy oils

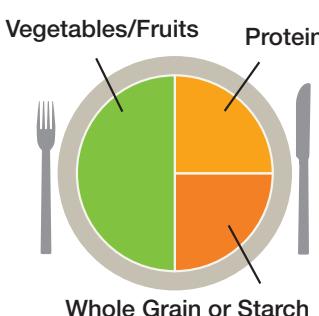
Choose healthy oils like olive, canola or avocado instead of butter. Limit foods high in saturated fat like fatty meats and full-fat dairy products. Avoid trans-fats, such as hydrogenated oils, as much as possible.

Red wine in moderation

If you like, have a glass of red wine with meals. Limit to two glasses a day for men, or one glass per day for women or anyone over age 65. A serving size is 5 ounces.

Rethink your plate

To help you eat the right amount of foods, follow this simple rule: fill 1/2 your plate with vegetables and fruit, 1/4 with a healthy protein (like beans, lentils, fish), and 1/4 with whole grain or starchy vegetable (like potato).



Sutter Resources

To find out more about nutrition, go to sutterhealth.org/health/nutrition.

Ask your healthcare team for a referral to a registered dietitian to make a personal Mediterranean plan for you.

You may find local resources by going to sutterhealth.org/classes-events and selecting the topics "Heart Health" and "Nutrition."

What Are Processed Foods?

Processed foods are generally any packaged food with a nutrition label. Many are high in unhealthy fats, salt and sugar such as snack foods, frozen meals and processed meats. Choose options lower in saturated fat, sodium (salt) and added sugars. Avoid foods with partially hydrogenated oils.

Servings

The Mediterranean eating plan doesn't have fixed servings, but general food guidelines. Use these suggestions to create your own eating plan. Your calorie needs may differ based on your age, activity level and health goals.

Food Group	What to Choose
Eat as main part of all meals	
 Vegetables	Variety of fresh, frozen or canned vegetables without added sauces, sodium or sugar.
 Fruit	Variety of fresh, frozen or canned fruit without added sauces, sodium or sugar.
 Legumes and nuts	Lentils, beans and peas (dried or canned without added sauces, sodium or sugar). Almonds, walnuts, pecans and nut butters.
 Grains	Mostly whole grains. Whole-wheat breads and pasta. Brown rice, barley and oatmeal.
 Olive Oil and Herbs	Cook with olive oil instead of butter or other saturated fats. Season with herbs.
Eat two or more times a week	
 Fish and seafood	Marine fish and shellfish.
Eat moderate portions daily to weekly	
 Poultry	Eggs. Chicken and turkey (3 oz portions; about the size of a deck of cards).
 Dairy	Milk, yogurt and cheese.
Eat less often than other foods	
 Meat	Beef and pork (3-4 times a month in 3 oz portions; about the size of a deck of cards).
 Sweets	Ice cream, pastries and pie. Choose fresh fruit with honey instead.