

Mediterranean Food Guide

People who live near the Mediterranean Sea have been found to have a lower risk of heart disease. The Mediterranean diet attempts to copy the eating habits of the people who live there. Following this diet may lower your risk of heart disease.

This lifestyle is built on daily exercise along with a lot of fruit, vegetables, plant-based proteins, whole grains, fish and smaller amounts of poultry, red meat and simple sugars. Fatty fish (salmon), olive oil, and nuts make this diet higher in fat than the classic “heart healthy diet.” These fats are mostly “healthy fats” also called monounsaturated fats, and when consumed in place of “unhealthy fats” also called saturated fats, are good for the heart.

The pyramid below and the chart on the next page describe the types of food and serving sizes in this heart healthy meal plan.

Physical Activity

Getting enough exercise is very important. Daily physical activity and exercise are encouraged in the Mediterranean diet pyramid. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise every week. Moderate-to-vigorous exercises includes walking at a brisk pace, biking, swimming, or other activities that increases your heart rate. Always choose activities that you enjoy and that are safe, to be active throughout your life.

Achieve and Maintain a Healthy Weight

The high fat content of the Mediterranean diet may lead to more calorie intake than needed and result in weight gain. To avoid this, pay attention to how much you are eating. If you are trying to lose weight, choose the smaller number of servings from each food group and try to make your serving sizes match those listed.

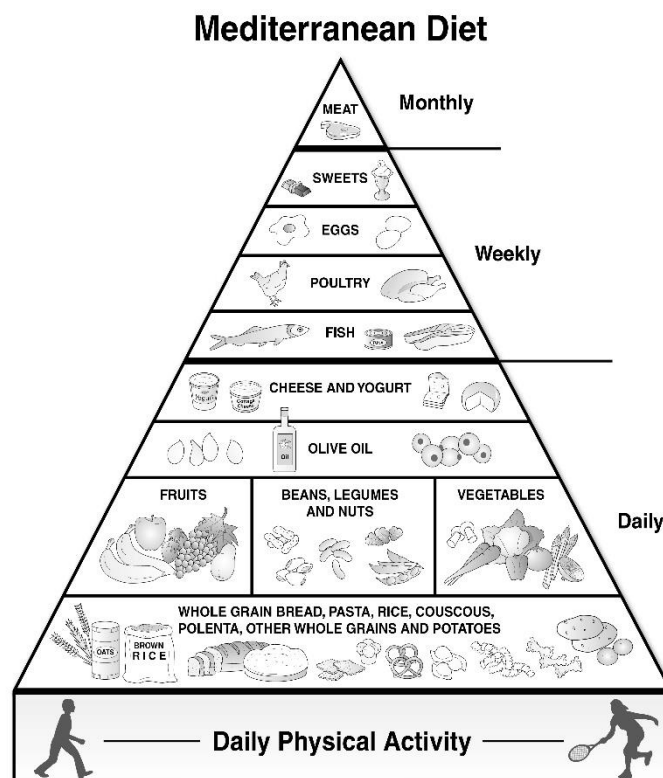


Table 1. Dietary and Lifestyle Components of Traditional Mediterranean Diet

Dietary Components	
1	High consumption of food from plant sources, including grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds.
2	Emphasis on a variety of minimally processed and seasonally fresh, locally grown foods.
3	Olive oil as the main dietary fat used to cook, bake and flavor.
4	Total fat ranging from 25% to 35% of energy with saturated fat accounting for $\leq 7\%$ to 8% of energy.
5	Daily consumption of low to moderate amounts of dairy products, mainly cheese and yogurt.
6	Twice-weekly consumption of low to moderate amounts of fish and poultry; up to four whole eggs per week.
7	Fresh fruit as the typical dessert, with sweets containing concentrated sugars or honey consumed only a few times per week.
8	Eat red meat only a few times per month.
9	Drink moderate amounts of wine, normally with meals. Approximately 1–2 glasses per day for men and 1 glass for women (optional).
10	Use of herbs and spices to flavor food instead of salt or fat.
Lifestyle Components	
1	Regular daily physical activity.
2	Meals in the company of friends and family.

Food Groups and Servings per day	Serving Sizes
Non-Starchy Vegetables 4-8 servings per day	One serving is ½ cup of cooked vegetables or 1 cup raw vegetables. Non-starchy vegetables include artichoke, asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, celery, carrots, tomatoes, eggplant, cucumber, onion, green and wax beans, zucchini, turnips, peppers, salad greens and mushrooms (Potatoes, peas, and corn are starchy vegetables).
Fruit 2-4 servings per day	One serving is a small fresh fruit or ½ cup juice or ¼ cup dried fruit.

Food Groups and Servings per day	Serving Sizes
Fruit (cont.)	<p>Fresh fruits are preferred because of the fiber and other nutrients they contain. Fruits canned in light syrup or their own juice, and frozen fruit with little or no added sugar are also good choices.</p> <p>Use only small amounts of fruit juice (6 oz per day or less), since even unsweetened juices can contain as much sugar as regular soda.</p>
Legumes and Nuts 2-4 servings per day	<p>Legumes: One serving is ½ cup cooked kidney, black, garbanzo, pinto, soy (edamame), navy beans, split peas, or lentils, or ¼ cup fat free refried beans or baked beans.</p> <p>Nuts and Seeds: One serving is 2 Tbsp. sunflower or sesame seeds, 1 Tbsp. peanut butter, 7-8 walnuts or pecans, 20 peanuts, or 12-15 almonds Aim for 1-2 servings of nuts or seeds and 1-2 servings of legumes per day. Legumes are high in fiber, protein, and minerals. Nuts are high in unsaturated fat and may increase HDL cholesterol without increasing LDL cholesterol levels.</p>
Low-Fat Dairy Products 1-3 servings per day	<p>One serving is 1 cup of skim milk, non-fat yogurt, or 1oz of low-fat (part-skim) cheese.</p> <p>Calcium-fortified soy milk, soy yogurt, and soy cheese can take the place of dairy products. If servings of dairy or fortified soy are less than 2 per day, we advise a calcium and vitamin D supplement.</p>
Fish or shellfish 2-3 times a week	<p>One serving is 3 ounces (about the size of a deck of cards).</p> <p>Cook fish by baking, sautéing, broiling, roasting, grilling, or poaching. Choose fatty fishes like salmon, tuna, herring, sardines, or mackerel often. The fat in fish is high in omega-3 fats, so it has healthy effects on triglycerides and blood cells.</p>
Poultry, if desired 1-3 times a week	<p>One serving is 3 ounces (about the size of a deck of cards).</p> <p>Bake, sauté, stir fry, roast, or grill the poultry you eat, and eat it without the skin.</p>
Whole Grains and Starchy Vegetables 4-6 servings per day	<p>One serving is about 1 ounce of any of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 slice whole wheat bread ½ cup potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, or peas ½ large whole grain bun 1 small whole grain roll 6-inch whole wheat pita 6 whole grain crackers ½ cup cooked whole grain cereal (oatmeal, cracked wheat, quinoa) ½ cup cooked whole wheat pasta, brown rice, or barley

Food Groups	Servings Sizes, Examples, and Notes
Healthy fats 4-6 servings per day	<p>One serving is one of any of these:</p> <p>1 tsp. olive or canola oil 2 tsp light margarine 1 Tbsp of regular salad dressing 2 Tbsp of light salad dressing, made with oil 1 tsp regular mayonnaise 1/8 of an avocado 5 olives (high salt – limit if you have high blood pressure)</p> <p>These fats are mostly unsaturated and contain little or no trans-fat, so they will not increase LDL cholesterol levels. Remember that all fats are a concentrated source of calories, so keep the servings small, as recommended.</p>
Alcohol	<p>No more than one drink for women or two drinks for men per day.</p> <p>One drink equals one 12-ounce beer, 4 ounces of wine, or 1½ ounces liquor (whiskey, vodka, brandy, etc.).</p> <p>People with high blood pressure or high triglycerides, or those taking certain medicines may be advised to avoid all alcohol. Ask your doctor to be sure.</p>
Food Groups and Servings per day	<p style="text-align: center;">Serving Sizes</p>
	<p>Whole grains are high in fiber and have less effect on blood sugar and triglyceride levels than refined, processed grains like white bread and pasta. Whole grains also keep the stomach full longer, making it easier to control hunger.</p>

Other Food Groups

- **Eggs:** Limit egg yolks to 4 per week. Egg whites can be eaten in unlimited amounts.
- **Sweets:** Eat sweets less often – use fruit as your dessert.
- **Red Meat:** Lean red meats (beef, pork, lamb and veal) can be eaten 3-4 times per month.

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please call UW Health at one of the phone numbers below.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH)
(608) 890-5500

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF)
(608) 287-2770

You can also visit our website at:
www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#410