

The Mediterranean Style of Eating

The Mediterranean diet reflects the traditional way of eating in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea such as Italy, Spain, Greece, France and Morocco.

The Mediterranean diet is more than just the food; it focuses on adapting a healthier lifestyle, including:

- Being physically active
- Sharing meals with friends and family
- Getting enough rest
- Reducing stress

The Mediterranean diet has been widely studied and found to have many health benefits such as:

- Reducing your risk of developing cardiovascular disease
- Lower cholesterol levels
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved blood glucose control for individuals with type 2 diabetes

Follow the tips outlined below to help make the Mediterranean diet apart of your typical eating pattern:

- Include a variety of whole grains everyday
 - Examples include: barley, quinoa, couscous, bulgur, faro, millet, brown rice, wheat berries, buckwheat, oats and whole grain bread
- Aim for ½ the plate non-starchy vegetables at lunch and dinner meals everyday
 - Select different coloured vegetables prepared in a variety of ways, such as roasting, sautéing, and steaming
 - Add into soups, stews and casseroles
 - Try to have at least one serving of raw vegetables everyday, such as green leafy salad or cut-up vegetables
 - Starchy vegetables are defined as: potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn and winter squash
- Include 2-3 fruit everyday
 - Try having fruit as a healthy snack or dessert
 - Select whole fresh or frozen fruit without any added sugar
 - 1 serving = 1 medium fruit, 1 cup berries or ½ cup of other fruit
- Include unsalted nuts and seeds everyday
 - ¼ cup portion makes the perfect snack
 - Try sprinkling on top salads

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- Incorporate more legumes (beans, peas and lentils), try to have at least 2 times per week
 - Add into salads, soups and casseroles for plant based protein boost
 - Try adding pureed lentils into smoothie recipes or baked goods such as muffins
- Incorporate fish and seafood, try to have at least 2 times per week
 - Include a variety of fish such as salmon, sardines, cod, haddock, and light canned tuna or canned salmon. For canned fish varieties look for one packed in water containing less sodium
 - Include a variety of seafood such as scallops, shrimp, mussels and clams
 - Eat at least one serving a week of fish higher in omega 3s such as salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel or trout
- Choose lean poultry or wild game over red meat
 - Replace red meat with lean poultry, wild game, legumes, fish or seafood
 - When having red meat, opt for lean or extra lean cuts. Red meat is defined as goat, beef, pork and lamb
- Make olive oil the main source of added fat
 - Select extra virgin olive oil as it contains the most antioxidants and beneficial phytochemicals not present in other forms of olive oil
 - Extra virgin olive oil is very flavourful, making it a great addition into salad dressings
 - Extra virgin olive oil is heat sensitive, only use for medium heat cooking. For higher temperatures try using avocado oil
- Flavour food with fresh herbs, spices, garlic and onions instead of salt
 - Try using herbs such as rosemary, oregano, parsley, basil and mint
 - Spices like paprika, black pepper, cinnamon and nutmeg can be added to dishes in need of a flavour boost
- Drink plenty of fluids
 - Aim for 1.5 – 2 L (6-8 cups per day) of fluid every day
 - Place a jug of water on the table at meals to serve as a reminder to drink
 - Carry a water bottle around with you or keep a glass on your desk at work
 - Try making fruit infused water. Some ideas include: fresh lemon, lime and orange wedges, or cucumber slices and mint or fresh/frozen berries

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- If you drink wine, limit to moderate amounts with meals
 - If you do not currently drink wine, do not start. You do not have to drink wine to follow the Mediterranean diet
 - A moderate amount is defined as 1 glass per day for women and 2 glasses per day for men
 - One serving of wine = 5 oz glass
 - Aim to have days during the week where no alcohol is consumed

- Limit sweets
 - Try to keep sweet treats such as candies, pastries, desserts, sweetened pop/ juice for special occasions

- Mediterranean lifestyle habits
 - Make time to cook and prepare meals
 - Whenever possible, enjoy cooking and sharing a meal with friends and family
 - Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day
 - Find ways to add in activity to your daily routine
 - Get enough rest

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Canada's new food guide closely aligns with the Mediterranean style of eating and can be a helpful tool for planning balanced meals

Have plenty of vegetables and fruits

Eat protein foods

Make water your drink of choice



Choose whole grain foods

General Recommendations:

- Aim for ½ the plate non-starchy vegetables at lunch and supper meals
- Keep whole grains/ starchy vegetables to max 2 servings per meal
- Make sure all meals contain a protein rich food
- Include heart healthy fats

Adapted from PEN Resource *The Mediterranean Diet: A guide to healthy eating* and Alberta Health Resource *Mediterranean Style of Eating*