



Mediterranean Diet

Foods at the bottom of the pyramid should be eaten more often.
 Foods at the top of the pyramid should be eaten less often.

Choose everyday:

- ✓ 100% Whole grains
- ✓ Fruits
- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Beans, lentils, nuts
- ✓ Olive oil
- ✓ Low fat dairy

Choose weekly:

- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Chicken
- ✓ Eggs

Choose monthly:

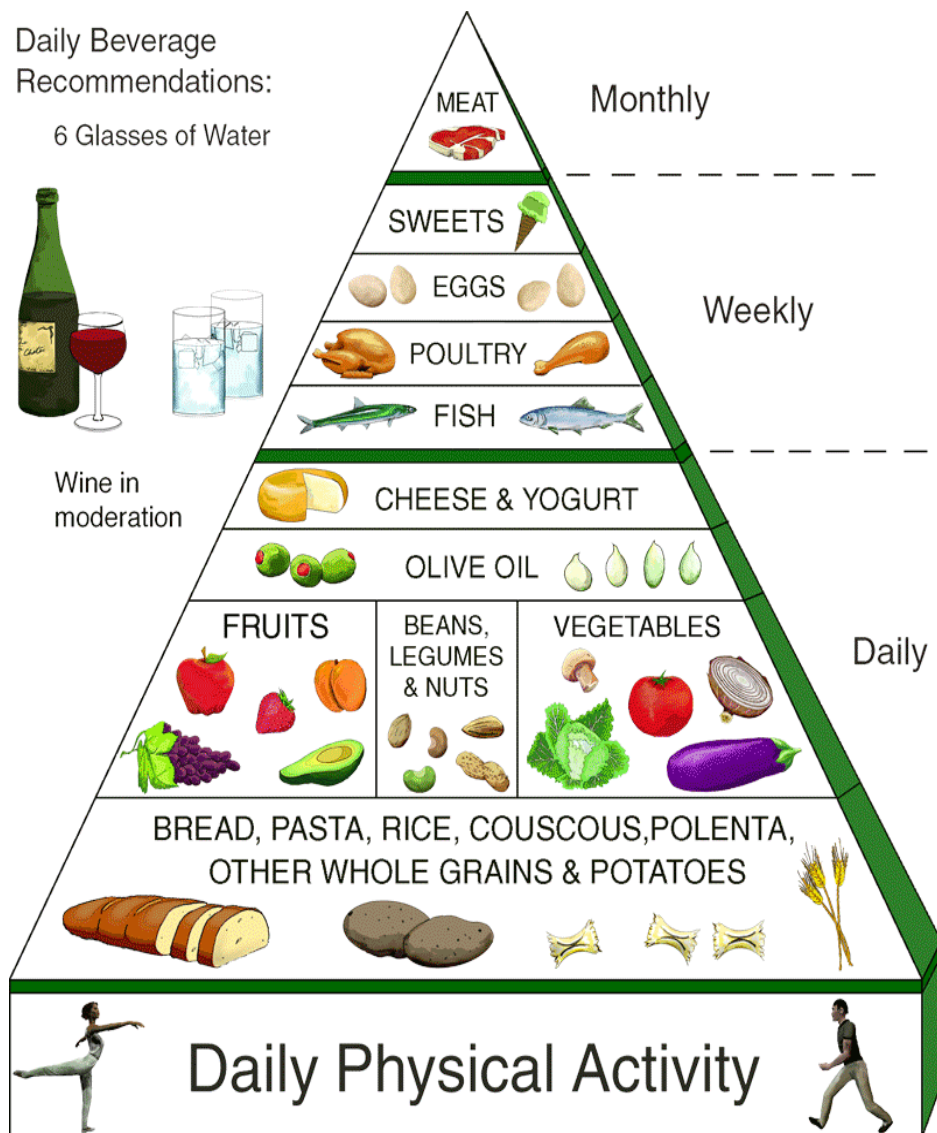
- ✓ Red meats

Also...

- ✓ Drink 6-8 cups of water daily
- ✓ Alcohol in moderation
 - Men (max 1-2 drink/day)
 - Women (max 0-1 drink/day)

1 drink= 12oz beer, 4oz wine, 1.5oz spirits

The Traditional Healthy Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



The Research...

British Medical Journal

Reviewed all the Mediterranean diet research from 1966-2008, and reported that a greater adherence is associated with improved health status, including a **decrease** in:

- Overall mortality by 9%
- Mortality from CVD by 9%
- Incidence of or mortality from cancer by 6%
- Incidence of Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease by 13%

(*BMJ* 2008;337;a1344)

Lyon's Heart Study

Compared the Mediterranean diet with a typical heart healthy diet in 605 patients who had already had a heart attack. The Mediterranean group showed a:

- 70% reduction in overall mortality
- 81% reduction in cardiac mortality

(*Circulation*. 1999; 99:779-785.)

How Does the Diet Work?



This isn't your typical *diet*, it's a lifestyle! The pyramid emphasizes healthy sources of fat, a very low intake of saturated and trans fat, a high fibre intake and a high intake of fruits and vegetables.

Healthy Choices Every Day!



Physical Activity is at the base of the pyramid, which means that it is important to include it each day. Regular exercise can include: walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, skipping, and recreational sports and leisure activities. Move your body in ways you enjoy!

Grains are the second largest group. Grains break down into simple sugars, which our body and brain use for fuel. Choose *whole* grains over *white/refined* grain products more often. Whole grains are packed with protein, fibre, B vitamins, and iron.

Fruits & Vegetables are packed with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre! Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables are best, but canned are also good options during certain seasons or if you are on a tight budget.

Legumes (beans, peas, & lentils) are high in protein, folate, potassium, iron, and magnesium. They are also an excellent source of soluble fibre which helps to lower blood sugar and cholesterol.

Nuts & Seeds are great to include as part of your regular diet. They help reduce LDL (bad cholesterol), increase HDL (good cholesterol) and are packed with nutrients, healthy fats and energy. A healthy portion of nuts is 10 almonds, 5 walnuts, or 15 shelled pistachios. Pair with a fruit for a balanced snack!

Olive Oil is the main source of added fat within the Mediterranean diet, instead of butter or lard. Olive oil is a heart healthy fat which helps to lower LDL (bad cholesterol) and increases HDL (good cholesterol), which is important for the prevention of cardiovascular disease.



Cheese & Yogurt are great dairy choices as they provide protein and other nutrients. All dairy has some saturated fat (which can raise cholesterol), so it is important to choose lower fat dairy products. The fat in dairy is called milk fat (M.F. %); aim for 0-2% milk, 0-3% yogurt, and less than 25% cheeses more often.



ZINCAGE Study

Explored the effects of the Mediterranean diet on inflammation in 950 people over 60 years of age. They found that the more olive oil consumed the lower the levels of inflammatory markers. They also found that the more red meats consumed the higher the levels of inflammatory markers.

*(ClinChemLabMed2
2008;46(7): 990-996)*

Nurses Health Study

Followed 84,000 nurses from the USA for 16 years. Researchers found that intake of fatty fish was inversely related to fatal and non fatal cardiovascular events (e.g. heart attacks and stroke) and deaths.

(JAMA 2002;287:1815 – 21)

There is a large body of research that focuses on the Mediterranean diet and the link between nutrition and health. For more information, speak to your registered dietitian.

Weekly vs Daily Choices

There are certain foods to include on a weekly basis. Aim for variety in your choices and enjoy each food, 1-3 days per week.

Fish & Seafood are great to eat 2-3 x/week. Choose fattier fish like salmon, mackerel, or sardines as they are high in healthy omega-3 fatty acids. White fish don't have this health fat, but are still good choices because they are lean and not as fishy tasting.



Poultry is an excellent protein source! It includes chicken, duck, goose, turkey, and pheasant. These white meats have less fat than red meat because they are not marbled with fat and the skin can be easily removed. Poultry fat does not contain the healthy omega-3s that fatty fish does, so it is best to remove this fat.

Eggs are packed with nutrients, including protein, iron and B vitamins. People used to avoid eggs because they contain cholesterol, however we now know that cholesterol in food doesn't have a significant effect on blood levels of cholesterol, in most people. Eggs do contain some saturated fat (which raises LDL), so it is best to choose them a few times per week instead of every day.

Sweets & treats can be enjoyed in moderation. Those living with chronic diseases, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, may benefit from reducing their intake of these foods, as they can raise blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

Only on a Monthly Basis

Red meats include beef, pork, goat and lamb. The Mediterranean diet limits these meats to 1-2x per month. There is some research indicating that diets high in red meat can lead to certain types of cancers. Red meat may also be hard for our bodies to digest and it is high in saturated fat.

Alcohol in Moderation

If you do not drink alcohol regularly, we do not recommend that you start. Research on alcohol consumption is controversial. Although some people promote the regular consumption of red wine for some possible health benefits, it is known that alcohol consumption can lead to diseases of body organs and cancer. Diets that are high in fruits and vegetables provide plenty of protective antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.

For more information and advice contact your registered dietitian

