

Alert Blood pressure medication recall alert: Several medications recalled by the FDA

[View details](#)

✕

[Heart Attack And Stroke Symptoms](#)[Volunteer](#)[Donate](#)[Healthy Living](#)[Health Topics](#)[Professionals](#)[Get Involved](#)[About Us](#)[CPR](#)[Find Your Local Office](#)[Home](#) / [Healthy Living](#) / [Healthy Eating](#) / [Eat Smart](#) / [Nutrition Basics](#) / **[Mediterranean Diet](#)**[Healthy for Good Topics](#)

or

Mediterranean Diet



Mediterranean diet is a generic term based on the typical eating habits in the countries that border the Mediterranean Sea. Elements include dairy products, fish and poultry being more common than red meat; fruits, vegetables, bread and other cereals, potatoes, beans, nuts and seeds; use of olive oil; wine consumed in low to moderate amounts. These diets have similarities to the American Heart Association's dietary recommendations, except a relatively high percentage of calories in Mediterranean-style diets come from fat.

[Eat Smart](#)[American Heart Association Cookbooks](#)[Eat Smart Month](#)[Fats](#)[Nutrition Basics](#)[5 Tips to Deal with Picky Eaters \(Both Kids & Adults\)](#)[The American Heart Association's Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations](#)[Alcohol and Heart Health](#)[Caffeine and Heart Disease](#)[Can Processed Foods Be Part of a Healthy Diet](#)[Can Processed Foods Be Healthy Infographic](#)[Carbohydrates](#)[Daily Tips to Help Your Family Eat Better](#)[Dairy Products - Milk Yogurt and Cheese](#)

What is the "Mediterranean" diet?

There's no one "Mediterranean" diet. At least 16 countries border the Mediterranean Sea. Diets vary between these countries and also between regions within a country. Many differences in culture, ethnic background, religion, economy and agricultural production result in different diets. But the common Mediterranean dietary pattern has these characteristics:

- high consumption of fruits, vegetables, bread and other cereals, potatoes, beans, nuts and seeds
- olive oil is an important monounsaturated fat source
- dairy products, fish and poultry are consumed in low to moderate amounts, and little red meat is eaten
- eggs are consumed zero to four times a week
- wine is consumed in low to moderate amounts

Does a Mediterranean-style diet follow American Heart Association dietary recommendations?

Mediterranean-style diets are often close to our dietary recommendations, but they don't follow them exactly. In general, the diets of Mediterranean peoples contain a relatively high percentage of calories from fat. This is thought to contribute to the increasing obesity in these countries, which is becoming a concern.

People who follow the average Mediterranean diet eat less saturated fat than those who eat the average American diet. In fact, saturated fat consumption is well within our dietary guidelines.

More than half the fat calories in a Mediterranean diet come from monounsaturated fats (mainly from olive oil). Monounsaturated fat doesn't raise blood cholesterol levels the way saturated fat does.

The incidence of heart disease in Mediterranean countries is lower than in the United States. Death rates are lower, too. But this may not be entirely due to the diet. Lifestyle factors (such as more physical activity and extended social support systems) may also play a part.

Before advising people to follow a Mediterranean diet, we need more studies to find out whether the diet itself or other lifestyle factors account for the lower deaths from heart disease.

Related AHA publications:

- [Easy Food Tips for Heart-Healthy Eating \(also in Spanish\)](#)
- "How Can I Cook Healthfully?" and "How Do I Follow a Low-Fat Diet?" in Answers by Heart kit (also in Spanish kit)

[Dietary Recommendations for Healthy Children](#)

[Eat Healthy on a Budget by Planning Ahead](#)

[Food as Fuel Before, During and After Workouts](#)

[Food Diary - How to Keep Track of What You Eat](#)

[Food Packaging Claims](#)

[Get Smart About Superfoods Infographic](#)

[Have a Heart-Healthy Football Season](#)

[Healthy Foods Under \\$1 Per Serving](#)

[Healthy Post-Play Snacks](#)

[Healthy Snacks for Summer Vacation - By Devin Alexander](#)

[Healthy Swaps for Common Foods](#)

[Heartburn or heart attack](#)

[Holiday Healthy Eating Guide](#)

[How Can I Eat More Nutrient Dense Foods](#)

[How much protein should I eat in a serving? Infographic](#)

[How to Eat Healthy without "Dieting"](#)

[How to Have a Healthy Halloween](#)

[How to Make Breakfast a Healthy Habit](#)

[Is 3 Meals a Day the Only Way](#)

[Making the Most of the Nutrition Facts Label Infographic](#)

[Meat, Poultry, and Fish: Picking Healthy Proteins](#)

[Mediterranean Diet](#)

[Organic Food Fact vs Perception](#)

[Portion Size Versus Serving Size](#)

[Protein and Heart Health](#)

[Shopping on a Budget Infographic](#)

See also:

[Dietary Guidelines for Healthy Children](#)

[Meat, Poultry and Fish](#)

[Milk Products](#)

[Vegetarian Diets](#)

Last Reviewed: Apr 18, 2018

[Suggested Servings from Each Food Group](#)

[The Benefits of Beans and Legumes](#)

[Top 7 Excuses to Overindulge, and How to Take Control](#)

[Types of Whole Grains](#)

[Understanding Food Nutrition Labels](#)

[Understanding Ingredients on Food Labels](#)

[Vegetarian, Vegan and Meals Without Meat](#)

[Vitamin Supplements: Hype or Help for Healthy Eating](#)

[What is a healthy diet? Recommended Serving Infographic](#)

[What is clean eating? Infographic](#)

[Whole Grains, Refined Grains, and Dietary Fiber](#)

[Sodium](#)

[Sugar](#)

[Healthy For Good: Spanish Infographics](#)

Related Articles



Dietary Fats





Daily Tips to Help Your Family Eat Better

Popular Articles



Food as Fuel Before, During and After Workouts

MITO #1 vs REALIDAD!

Los únicos problemas de salud asociados con el alto consumo de sodio son problemas como la presión arterial alta y enfermedades cardíacas, problemas de adultos y no de niños.

La ciencia afirma que hay un vínculo entre consumir menos sodio y tener una vida más saludable, incluso en niños y adolescentes.*

Por ejemplo, los niños que llevan dietas altas en sodio son aproximadamente 35% más propensos a tener presión arterial elevada en comparación con los niños que consumen dietas bajas en sodio,¹ y la tasa de presión arterial alta está aumentando en los niños estadounidenses.² Además de la salud cardíaca, el sodio afecta la salud ósea, cerebral, estomacal y renal.³

MITO #2 vs REALIDAD!

La evidencia científica para apoyar la disminución de sodio en las comidas escolares no es concluyente.

Ha habido ruido sobre algunos estudios de sodio, creando confusión y desestimando normas de nutrición para las comidas escolares.

Un gran cuerpo de investigación científica indica que disminuir el consumo de sodio baja la presión arterial en adultos y niños.⁴

MITO #3 vs REALIDAD!

Es imposible para las escuelas cumplir con los límites de sodio del USDA.

En realidad, 98.5% de las escuelas son exitosas al cumplir los estándares de comidas actualizados.⁵ Algunas escuelas ya están cumpliendo con el USDA 2017. Muchas empresas ya ofrecen alimentos que cumplen con los límites establecidos por el USDA.⁶

Sodio: Mitos y realidades para niños

SweetLeaf®

Nationally Supported by



Learn More about SweetLeaf® >

*All health/medical information on this website has been reviewed and approved by the American Heart Association, based on scientific research and American Heart Association guidelines. [Use this link](#) for more information on our content editorial process.



National Center

7272 Greenville Ave.
Dallas, TX 75231

Customer Service

1-800-AHA-USA-1
1-800-242-8721

[Contact Us](#)

Hours

Mon - Fri: 7AM-9PM CST
Sat - Sun: 9AM-5PM CST

About Us

- About the AHA/ASA >
- Annual Report (PDF) >
- AHA Financial Information >
- Careers >
- International Programs >
- Latest Heart and Stroke News >
- AHA/ASA Media >
- Newsroom >

Get Involved

- Give
- Advocate
- Volunteer
- SHOP

Our Sites

- > American Heart Association >
- > American Stroke Association >
- > CPR & ECC >
- > Professional Heart Daily >
- > More Sites >



[Privacy Policy](#) | [Copyright](#) | [Ethics Policy](#) | [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) | [Linking Policy](#) | [Diversity](#) | [Careers](#) | [Suppliers & Providers](#) | [Accessibility Statement](#)

©2019 American Heart Association, Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized use prohibited.
The American Heart Association is a qualified 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.
*Red Dress™ DHHS, Go Red™ AHA ; National Wear Red Day® is a registered trademark.



This site complies with the [HONcode Standard](#) for trustworthy health information: [verify here](#).