

The Mediterranean Diet - U.S. News and Report

The Mediterranean diet has been associated with a decreased risk for heart disease, and it's also been shown to reduce blood pressure and "bad" LDL cholesterol. If your Mediterranean approach largely shuns saturated fat (which contributes to high cholesterol), and includes healthier mono- and polyunsaturated fats in moderation (which can reduce cholesterol), you'll do your heart a favor.

- A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2013 found that about 30 percent of heart attacks, strokes and deaths from heart disease can be prevented in high-risk people if they switch to a Mediterranean diet. These findings are based on the first major clinical trial to measure the eating approach's effect on heart risks; it ended early, after about five years, because the results were so clear. Researchers say the study's results provide evidence that the diet is a "powerful" tool in reducing heart disease risk, including among those already on statins or blood pressure drugs.
- A study published in October 2014 in the Canadian Medical Association Journal concluded that the Mediterranean diet may reverse metabolic syndrome, a group of risk factors that raises your risk for heart disease and other health problems, like diabetes. While the eating style did not prevent the condition from developing, it appeared to reverse it once a person had it. Researchers found that those on a Mediterranean diet with extra olive oil were 35 percent more likely than those on a low-fat diet to reverse metabolic syndrome, and those on a Mediterranean diet supplemented with nuts were 28 percent more likely to reverse it.
- A February 2014 [study](#) in the journal PLOS ONE evaluated the diets of 780 male firefighters in the Midwest. The closer their habits matched a Mediterranean-style diet, the better their cholesterol levels and the less likely they were to gain weight or have metabolic syndrome. The study, funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, was the first to look at the diet's effect on a younger, working population in the U.S.
- A [study](#) published in the September 2015 issue of the journal Gut looked at about 150 Italian adults and found that vegans, vegetarians and others who complied with a mostly Mediterranean diet had more short chain fatty acids, which are linked to a lower risk of heart disease, among other positive health benefits.

Can it prevent or control diabetes?

The diet appears to be a viable option for both.

Prevention: Being overweight is one of the biggest risk factors for type 2 diabetes. If you need to lose weight and keep it off, and a Mediterranean diet helps you do it, you'll almost certainly tilt the odds in your favor. Research also suggests following a healthy Mediterranean-style diet may reverse or reduce the risk of developing metabolic syndrome, which can lead to type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

A study published in the journal Diabetologia in August 2013 suggests that people who follow a Mediterranean diet have a lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes, compared with those who don't follow the eating style. The study was based on dietary and diabetes data from more than

22,295 people who were followed for more than 11 years. Researchers found that those who most closely adhered to a Mediterranean-style diet were 12 percent less likely to develop diabetes than those who followed it the least.

A study published in January 2014 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* focused on more than 3,500 seniors who were at high risk for heart disease but didn't yet have diabetes. After four years, the researchers found that individuals in a group that consumed a non-Mediterranean low-fat diet were most likely to develop diabetes. Those who followed a Mediterranean diet supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil were least likely to develop the disease, followed by those on a Mediterranean diet supplemented with nuts.

The 2015 study in the journal *Gut* also suggests the Mediterranean diet can help prevent diabetes, since the short chain fatty acids the diet seems to promote are linked to a decreased risk of the disease.

Control: A Mediterranean diet can be in line with the American Diabetes Association's nutrition guidance. And because there are no rigid meal plans or prepackaged meals, you can ensure that what you're eating doesn't go against your doctor's advice. Some research has shown that diabetics on a Mediterranean diet may improve their levels of hemoglobin A1C, a measure of blood sugar over time.

Does the diet allow for restrictions and preferences?

Anyone can follow this approach – choose your preference for more information.

Supplement recommended? N/A

Vegetarian or Vegan: Yes, with a few minor tweaks you can easily replace any animal products with vegetarian- or vegan-friendly options.

Gluten-Free: Yes, you can choose products that are certified gluten-free.

Low-Salt: Doable. It's up to you to stay under your limit, but the diet's emphasis on fruits and veggies should make it easier. Just make sure the nuts are salt-free.

Kosher: Yes, you have the freedom to use only kosher ingredients.

Nutrition

Here's a breakdown of the nutritional content of a day's meals on a typical Mediterranean diet, alongside recommendations from the government's 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Because this diet is highly individualized, your actual intake will vary. Diet figures were supplied by Oldways.

Mediterranean Diet		Recommended	
		Women	Men
Calories	1,527	21-25: 2,000	21-40: 2,400
		26-50: 1,800	41-60: 2,200
		51+: 1,600	61+: 2,000
Total Fat	29%	20%-35%	
Saturated	5%	Less than 10%	
Trans	0%	N/A	
Total Carbohydrates	50%	45%-65%	
Sugars (total except as noted)	20%	N/A	
Fiber	32 g.	Women	Men
		19-30: 28 g.	19-30: 34 g.
		31-50: 25 g.	31-50: 31 g.
		51+: 22 g.	51+: 28 g.
Protein	18%	10%-35%	
Sodium	1,368 mg.	Under 2,300 mg., under 1,500 mg. for 51+	
Potassium	3,351 mg.	At least 4,700 mg.	
Calcium	418 mg.	19-50: 1,000 mg. 51+: 1,200 mg.	
Vitamin B-12	2.8 mcg.	2.4 mcg.	
Vitamin D	N/A	15 mcg.	

Recommendations apply to adults 19 and older except as noted. Recommended calories assume a sedentary lifestyle. g.: grams. mg.: milligrams. mcg.: micrograms. Because of rounding, protein, fat, and carbohydrate content may not add up to 100 percent.