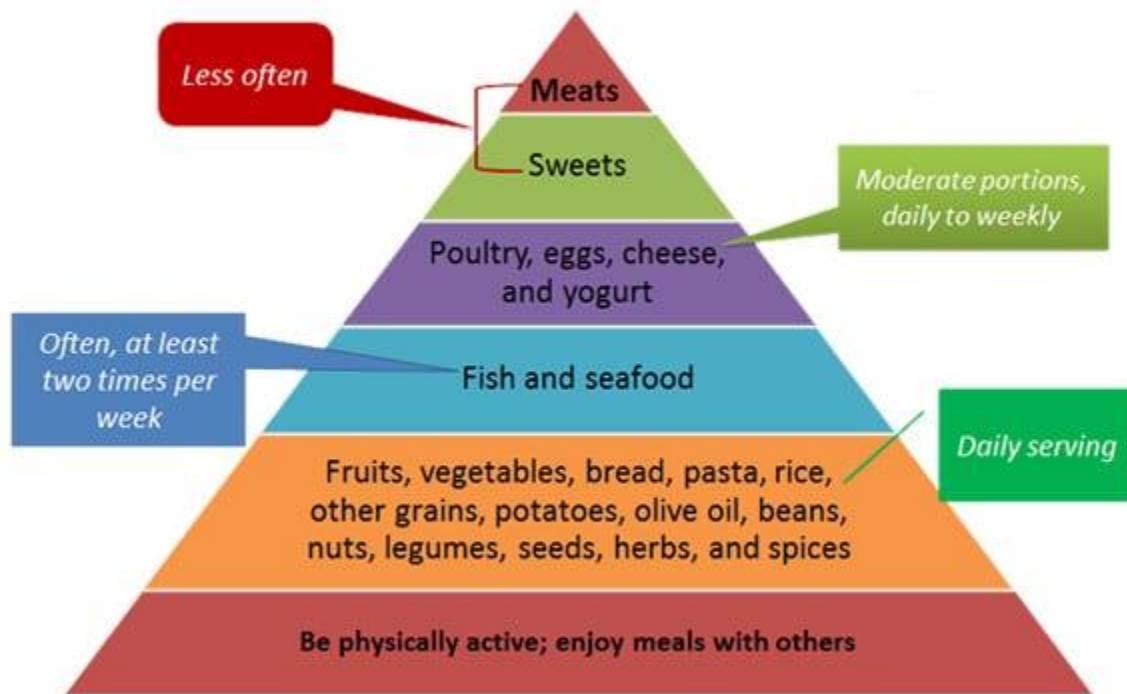


The Mediterranean Diet

Over the years we have seen diets come into enthusiastic favor and then fall spectacularly out of favor. It can be extraordinarily frustrating trying to sift through all information and research data that clutters the headlines. As a result, we have forgotten that food and eating should be joyful and simple, not a chore. The one diet, or style of eating, that consistently resurfaces through all the diet mayhem is the Mediterranean Diet. Studies have shown that people who consume a Mediterranean Diet have lower rates of cardiovascular disease and cancer. This is thought to be due to the emphasis on monounsaturated fats, fruits and vegetables and whole grains. More importantly, however, people who consume this diet have an easier time managing their weight as the diet is satisfying using real food.

The Mediterranean Diet is the traditional diet eaten by people living in the Mediterranean region. This region primarily includes Greece, Italy, Turkey, Spain, southern France, parts of the Middle East and Northern Africa. The diet was founded on foods that were easily cultivated in those regions and other cultural influences. If you travel to those regions today, you will be treated to a fantastic assortment and combination of foods and spices that people have been eating for thousands of years.



The basic premise of the diet is consuming monounsaturated fatty acids, Omega 3 fatty acids, antioxidants, whole grains, high fiber foods and lots of fruit and vegetables. Balancing the amount of these things is the main tenant of this diet. Please look at the food pyramid in your handout to help you create dietary balance.

The basic components of the Mediterranean Diet are:

- Extra Virgin Olive Oil -Use this in place of other fats such as butter, margarine and other vegetable oils. If cooking with it, remember that Olive Oil is not recommended for super high heat. It can burn quickly. It is fine for sautéing but don't let it heat too smoking. It is great for roasting vegetables too.
- Olives
- Whole Grains -Bread, Pita, wraps and cereal. Make sure they are as whole grain as possible and don't overdo the amount. Rice, polenta, couscous and quinoa are used a lot in this diet. Pasta, even whole wheat, needs to be in small portions. These should be consumed daily and be part of the foundation of your meal.
- Lots of fresh fruit and vegetables -5 to 6 one cup servings a day. This should be largest part and foundation of each meal. Green leafy and colorful vegetables and berries are rich in antioxidants and should be consumed the most. Keep the starchy vegetables to a minimum, such as potatoes, carrots, peas and corn as they are quite

high in sugar and lower in fiber. If you are cooking your vegetables, steam or roast them for as short a time as possible. Do not boil them. Fresh fruit is a great satisfying dessert.

- Lots of legumes seeds and nuts -Legumes and other dry beans are great sources of protein and fiber. Nuts and seeds, such as almonds, pistachios, cashews, walnuts, sunflower, pumpkin and flax seeds, are a great satisfying snack. Nuts and seeds, however, are high in fat and need to be consumed in reasonable portions.
- Yogurt and cheese -Plain greek yogurt, feta and goat cheese are great sources of protein, calcium and good fat sources. These can be consumed daily. Eggs, as fresh as possible, can be consumed 2-3x/week. Milk is limited in this diet.
- Fish and other seafood -Fish has Omega 3 fatty acids, especially fish from wild-caught, cold water sources Wild fish eat a diet consisting of marine and plant oils that are high in Omega 3. Fish should be consumed at least 2 times weekly. Fish should be baked, grilled or broiled. Do not fry or bread it.
- Poultry -Poultry should be eaten weekly and in small portions. As above, grill, bake or broil your poultry.
- Limited red meat -Red meats should be in small portions to add to the meal, not be the meal. Probably eaten no more than one time per month. You will find you won't miss red meats if you have a diet in higher in monounsaturated fatty acids.
- Water is very important. 6-8 eight-ounce glasses per day.
- A little red wine is also good as long as there are no other reasons you cannot drink alcohol.

The following information is from Mediterranean Diet 101: A Meal Plan and Beginner's Guide By Kris Gunnars, BSc

- <https://authoritynutrition.com/mediterranean-diet-meal-plan/>

Sample Menu

Monday

- **Breakfast:** Greek yogurt with strawberries and oats.
- **Lunch:** Whole grain sandwich with vegetables.
- **Dinner:** A tuna salad, dressed in olive oil. A piece of fruit for dessert.

Tuesday

- **Breakfast:** Oatmeal with raisins.
- **Lunch:** Leftover tuna salad from the night before.
- **Dinner:** Salad with tomatoes, olives and feta cheese.

Wednesday

- **Breakfast:** Omelet with veggies, tomatoes and onions. A piece of fruit.
- **Lunch:** Whole grain sandwich, with cheese and fresh vegetables.
- **Dinner:** Mediterranean lasagne.

Thursday

- **Breakfast:** Yogurt with sliced fruits and nuts.
- **Lunch:** Leftover lasagne from the night before.
- **Dinner:** Broiled salmon, served with brown rice and vegetables.

Friday

- **Breakfast:** Eggs and vegetables, fried in olive oil.
- **Lunch:** Greek yogurt with strawberries, oats and nuts.
- **Dinner:** Grilled lamb, with salad and baked potato.

Saturday

- **Breakfast:** Oatmeal with raisins, nuts and an apple.
- **Lunch:** Whole grain sandwich with vegetables.
- **Dinner:** Mediterranean pizza made with whole wheat, topped with cheese, vegetables and olives.

Sunday

- **Breakfast:** Omelet with veggies and olives.
- **Lunch:** Leftover pizza from the night before.
- **Dinner:** Grilled chicken, with vegetables and a potato. Fruit for dessert.

There is usually no need to count [calories](#) or track macronutrients ([protein](#), fat and [carbs](#)) on the Mediterranean diet.

You don't need to eat more than 3 meals [per day](#).

Healthy Snacks

But if you become hungry between meals, then these are acceptable snacks:

- A handful of nuts.
- A piece of fruit.
- Carrots or baby carrots.
- Some berries or grapes.
- Leftovers from the night before.
- Greek yogurt.
- Apple slices with almond butter.



Things to Avoid

You should avoid these unhealthy foods and ingredients:

- **Added sugar:** Soda, candies, ice cream, table sugar and many others.
- **Refined grains:** White bread, pasta made with refined wheat, etc.
- **Trans fats:** Found in margarine and various processed foods.
- **Refined Oils:** Soybean oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil and others.
- **Processed meat:** Processed sausages, hot dogs, etc.
- **Highly processed foods:** Everything labelled "low-fat" or "diet" or looks like it was made in a factory.

You MUST read ingredients lists if you want to avoid these unhealthy ingredients.