



Follow the Mediterranean Diet

CHALLENGE
Follow the Mediterranean Diet.

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of the days you eat like people living around the Mediterranean Sea do.
2. Read "Live the Mediterranean Way" and "Eat Mediterranean-Style."
3. To complete the Challenge, you must eat a Mediterranean diet on at least 22 days this month.
4. Keep a record of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

Live the Mediterranean Way

People in the countries around the Mediterranean Sea live longer and suffer less chronic disease, such as heart disease or cancer, than do people living in the United States. No, it's not the air. It's the lifestyle, which is a lot different from that of most Americans.

People living in the Mediterranean region are much more physically active than Americans. They also traditionally have a stronger sense of family and community. They gather for relaxed meals and afternoon rests whenever possible. Life is not meant to be rushed, and food is meant to be savored.

Studies by Harvard researchers and others have linked the Mediterranean diet with lower rates of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, depression, and early death. According to Harvard, "a Mediterranean eating pattern benefits an Iowa accountant as much as a Greek farmer" in preventing or treating heart disease, lowering blood sugar levels, and even for losing weight.



Results from the ongoing Nurses' Health Study suggest that there are four ways you can decrease a woman's risk of sudden cardiac death:

1. Maintain a healthy weight.
2. Don't smoke.
3. Exercise for at least 30 minutes each day.
4. Eat a Mediterranean diet.

Italian researchers looked at 12 cohort studies to see if there was a link between the traditional Mediterranean diet, disease, and early death. A cohort study is one in which a group of people are involved in a study that lasts several years. More than 1.5 million people were included in the researchers' analysis.

The facts showed that people who ate a Mediterranean diet lived longer and were much healthier than people who did not. They were less likely to have heart disease and cancer. Plus, a Mediterranean diet reduced the risk of Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease.



Eat Mediterranean-Style

The traditional Mediterranean diet includes the native foods of North Africa, Italy, France, Greece, Turkey, and other parts of the Middle East. These countries differ culturally. But there are dietary characteristics shared by all.

The bulk of the traditional Mediterranean diet consists of whole plant foods. When meat is eaten, fish and poultry are the primary choice. Cheese or yogurt is usually eaten each day. Olive oil is the main source of fat, and honey is the most common sweetener.

You might already be following the Mediterranean diet and not know it. Here are the basics:

- ✓ **Pile on the vegetables.** Eat four or more servings each day – served raw, baked, steamed, or sautéed. If you're pressed for time, buy pre-packaged salads and pre-cut vegetables.
- ✓ **Eat fruit every day.** Eat at least four servings each day – fresh, frozen, dried, or cooked. Add pear slices, mandarin wedges, dried cranberries, or apple chunks to garden salads. Mix berries into yogurt. Whirl frozen fruit into a smoothie. Slice bananas onto whole-grain breakfast cereals.

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✓ **Choose whole grains.** Whole grains are full of vitamins, minerals, and protein. Eat at least four servings each day. Replace white breads (including tortillas) with whole-grain versions. Try brown or long-grain rice, quinoa, or amaranth in place of white rice.



✓ **Bring on the beans.** Legumes, including lentils and chickpeas (garbanzos), are a great substitute for meat and an excellent source of protein, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Add them to soups, salads, stews, and casseroles. Eat at least 1 serving daily.



Buy Fresh

Traditionally, food is locally grown and prepared with very little processing. Buy fresh, locally grown foods whenever possible. Avoid highly processed convenience foods and fast-foods.

✓ **Go a little nuts.** Snack on pistachios or pecans, sprinkle slivered almonds over vegetables, and top salads with walnuts. Although nuts contain a healthy fat, they are calorie-dense, so limit yourself to a handful a day.

✓ **Use healthy fats,** such as olive, canola, and soy oils, in place of butter, shortening, and stick margarines.

✓ **Eat less red meat.** Limit red meat – if you eat it at all – to a few meals a month. (Yes, a month!)

✓ **Choose lean cuts** and smaller portions. Most of the month, eat plant proteins or skinless chicken, turkey, and fish – baked, broiled, or grilled. For omega-3s, eat flaxseed meal, walnuts, and cold-water, wild-caught fish (for example, salmon and lake trout).

✓ **Spice up your meals.** To limit your salt intake, season your foods with garlic, onion, thyme, oregano, basil, cayenne, curry, ginger, and other herbs.

✓ **Eat naturally sweet foods.** Fruit makes a delicious dessert and is the treat of choice in the traditional Mediterranean diet. When you want added sweetener, try honey or stevia.



✓ **Drink plenty of water.**

Water? What about a small amount of red wine with meals? Wine is part of many Mediterranean meals. But



studies have linked alcohol with an increased risk of cancer, migraines, and other health problems. The antioxidants in red grape juice can help keep your circulation healthy without the risks of alcohol. And there are many studies that show the benefits of drinking water.

If you do drink alcohol, limit yourself to no more than one drink a day (for women) or two drinks a day (for men). Whether you choose wine or grape juice, drink it in addition to your 6-8 glasses of water each day.

✓ **Eat slowly.** Diet matters, but the leisurely pace of life also matters. Eating on the run and under stress can cause heartburn, poor absorption of nutrients, and obesity.

Search for traditional Mediterranean recipes here:
www.oldwayspt.org/recipesresources

American Heart Association, British Medical Journal, Center for the Advancement of Health, Harvard Women's Health Watch, & Journal of the American Medical Association





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Instructions

1. Post the Health Challenge™ Calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. To complete the Challenge, you must eat a Mediterranean diet on at least 22 days this month.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you ate a Mediterranean-style diet. You must meet this goal on at least 22 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this health practice for a lifetime of best health!
4. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	
ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	
ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	
ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	
ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	HC <input type="checkbox"/>	
ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	ex. min. _____	

_____ Number of days this month I ate a Mediterranean diet
 _____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity



Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____