



Mediterranean-style diet has benefits

I have heard a lot of good things about adopting a Mediterranean-style diet over the years. I don't want to make a drastic change, but what can I do to start transitioning to a diet that's more in line with what they recommend?

Basically, a Mediterranean-style diet has less meat but more fish and seafood, more plant-based foods, and more monounsaturated fats than what might be called an "American-style" diet.

According to MedlinePlus, a web-based service of the National Institutes of Health (<http://www.MedlinePlus.gov>), a Mediterranean diet is based on meals that are prepared and seasoned simply, without sauces or gravies, but instead focus on:

- Plant-based foods, with just a bit of meat or chicken if any at all.
- Larger servings of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and legumes
- Small portions of nuts.
- Foods that naturally contain high amounts of fiber, antioxidants and other nutrients.
- Plenty of fish and other seafood that are rich in omega-3 fats.
- Olive oil, a healthy, monounsaturated fat, as the main source of fat

used to flavor and prepare foods.

In addition, a Mediterranean-style diet includes very little red meat, sweets or other desserts, eggs and butter.

As you adopt a more Mediterranean-style diet, be sure to keep calories in balance — don't just add high-calorie nuts and olive oil to your already existing food pattern.

Recent studies indicate the benefits of the Mediterranean diet might be even greater than previously thought. For example, a study of 1,000 patients, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, showed that following such a diet, particularly eating more vegetables, salad and nuts, cut the risk of a heart-related event in people who had already been hospitalized for heart attack or severe chest pain.

Another study, presented at the 2010 Experimental Biology meeting in April, followed 4,000 older adults for 15 years. Researchers found that participants who more closely followed a Mediterranean diet were less likely to suffer from decline in their cognitive skills.

The Mayo Clinic offers detailed information about following a Mediterranean-style diet on its website. Go to <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mediterranean-diet/cl00011>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**For the week of
June 20, 2010**

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