

The Mediterranean Diet

What is the Mediterranean diet?

People from Mediterranean countries (e.g., Greece, Southern Italy, France, Spain) have lower rates of heart disease than Americans. This led researchers to look at the differences in diet. The Mediterranean diet is not a single diet, but rather a pattern of eating that includes the following:

- Lots of fruits, vegetables, bread, and other cereals, beans, nuts and seeds
- Olive oil
- Dairy products, fish and poultry in low to moderate amounts, and little red meat
- Wine in low to moderate amounts
- Although potatoes and eggs are part of the traditional Mediterranean diet, they are not usually counted as heart-healthy foods because there is no evidence that they lower your risk of heart disease.⁵

Does the Mediterranean diet lower your risk of heart disease and stroke?

Yes. A Study of 74,886 healthy women from the Nurse's Health Study found that women who stuck to the Mediterranean diet had a 30% lower risk of heart disease and stroke over the course of 20 years, compared with women who ate a less healthy diet.¹⁰⁷ The closer a woman adhered to the ideal Mediterranean diet, the lower her risk of heart disease-related death.

The Mediterranean diet also reduces your risk of dying early overall. Researchers asked more than 22,000 Greek adults aged 20 to 86 years (60% were women) to fill out food questionnaires that were then scored (0 to 9) for how closely they followed the traditional Mediterranean diet.⁶ Nearly 4 years later, the men and women who ate a Mediterranean-style diet were less likely to die from any cause (including heart disease and cancer) than those who did not eat a traditional diet. Another study of nearly 75,000 people (67% were women) older than 60 years from 9 European countries showed that they too benefited from eating a Mediterranean diet.

7

Does a Mediterranean diet help people with heart disease?

Yes. The Lyon Heart Study included more than 600 heart attack patients and instructed half of them to follow a Mediterranean diet. Those who ate the Mediterranean diet were 70% less likely to suffer another heart attack or die from heart disease after just over 2 years.⁸ The study was stopped early for ethical reasons so that all of the patients could learn about the benefits of a Mediterranean diet.

9

Another study followed more than 1,300 Greek men and women with heart disease for almost 4 years and scored their diets for how closely they followed a traditional Mediterranean diet. A higher score reduced the risk of dying by 27% and the risk of dying from heart disease specifically by 31%.⁵

Neither of these studies could show that any single part of the diet (fruits, vegetables, fish, cereal, legumes, or moderate alcohol) was better than any other for lowering heart disease risk.

[Next: Low-Fat Diets](#)

[SEO](#) by [AceSEF](#)