

Why Choose a Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern?

The Mediterranean-style eating pattern is one way to eat heart-healthy. It can help you lower your cholesterol levels and triglyceride levels, and improve your blood pressure, which can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. Research has shown that 30% percent of heart attacks, strokes, and deaths from heart disease can be prevented in high-risk people if they follow a Mediterranean-style eating pattern that has extra-virgin olive oil or unsalted nuts.



The Basics of Mediterranean-Style Eating

A Mediterranean-style eating pattern reflects the diet of people who live near the Mediterranean Sea. Foods that you can include in a Mediterranean-style eating pattern are a variety of fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, fish, and shellfish. Choose chicken and turkey over red meats. Use healthy fats, like olive oil, as your main oil, and eat unsalted nuts and seeds. Limit sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages. If you drink alcohol, have low to moderate amounts and consume with meals.

A Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern

Eat lots of vegetables. Fill at least $\frac{1}{2}$ your plate with a variety of brightly colored vegetables — either steamed, grilled, or raw.

Switch to fiber-rich whole grains.

Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with brown and wild rice, barley, bulgur, or quinoa. Choose whole-grain breads and cereals, including oats. Use whole-grain flour in baking instead of white flour.

For dessert, eat fruit. Choose a variety — fresh, dried, and frozen with no added sugar.

Enjoy some dairy products. Add non-fat or low-fat yogurt to meals and snacks. Choose skim or 1% milk. Use only small amounts of low-fat cheese.

Use healthy fats. Use extra-virgin olive oil in cooking and salads. Enjoy an ounce of raw nuts or seeds each day.



Enjoy meatless meals at least one night a week.

On meatless days, build your meals around legumes (beans and lentils) used in casseroles, chili, soups, and salads.

Include seafood at least twice per week. Choose fish high in omega-3 fatty acids like tuna, salmon, and sardines.

Choose smaller portions of meat.

Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with skinless chicken or turkey. Choose only lean cuts of beef and pork. Prepare all meats low in fat by grilling, baking, or broiling. Limit processed meats.

Eating a Mediterranean-Style Diet is Easy. A sample day may be:

- **Breakfast:** Low-sugar granola topped with plain Greek yogurt, fresh berries, walnuts, and ground flax seeds. Include unsweetened coffee or tea for a beverage.
- **Lunch:** Whole-wheat pita bread with hummus, romaine lettuce, olives, tomatoes with balsamic vinegar and olive oil, and a fresh apple. Choose a calorie-free beverage.
- **Snack:** Raw almonds and seeds, fresh, raw cut-up vegetables.
- **Dinner:** Salmon fillet on a bed of quinoa with olive oil, garlic, lemon, and herbs; a spinach salad with strawberries, pecans, olives, balsamic vinegar, and olive oil. Calorie-free beverage or alcohol, if desired.
- **Dessert:** Cut-up seasonal fresh fruit and serve with plain yogurt.

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey. Talk with an RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.

Why Follow a Heart-Healthy Eating Pattern?

A heart-healthy eating pattern can help you reduce your cholesterol and triglycerides. It includes eating a variety of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains; low-fat (1%) or fat-free dairy products; lean protein foods; fatty fish at least twice a week; vegetable oils and other foods rich in healthy fats; and less sweets, sugar-sweetened beverages, and fatty red meats. One heart-healthy eating pattern is the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH). **This eating pattern is:**

- High in fiber
- High in calcium, potassium, and magnesium
- Low in saturated fat and *trans* fat
- Low in added sugars
- Limiting sodium to 1,500 mg – 2,300 mg each day

Tips for Heart-Healthy Eating Using the DASH Pattern*

Eat up to 6 servings of grains a day; choose at least 3 servings of fiber-rich whole grains like 1 slice whole grain bread, 1 c. whole grain ready-to-eat cereal, ½ c. cooked brown rice, quinoa, or whole grain pasta.

Choose 2 – 3 servings a day of low-fat or fat-free dairy foods like skim or 1% milk, yogurt, and reduced-fat cheeses, or dairy alternatives like fortified soy or rice milk.

Use healthy fats like vegetable oils (canola, corn, olive, safflower, soybean or sunflower) in place of coconut oil. Use avocado, nut butters (almond, peanut), and soft margarines in place of butter. Eat 1 oz. of unsalted nuts or seeds 3 – 4 times each week as snacks or with meals.

Avoid foods with *trans* fat. Don't buy foods with the words "partially hydrogenated oil" on the ingredient list.

Limit sodium (salt) to 1,500 – 2,300 mg a day.

Flavor your food with herbs, spices, citrus juices, and vinegars instead of salt. Read the food label and choose lower sodium foods.

*The number of servings listed are based on 1,600 calories. You may need more or less calories each day.

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Eat 3-4 cups of colorful vegetables a day like raw or cooked vegetables; leafy salad greens served with an oil and vinegar dressing; or low-sodium vegetable juice.

Eat up to 2 cups of fruits a day like fresh fruit, or frozen or canned fruit without added sugar. Limit 100% juice to ½ cup a day and **avoid sugary drinks.**

Choose up to 6 oz. of lean animal protein foods a day like skinless poultry, lean cuts of red meat like "round" and "loin," and oily fish twice a week.

Eat at least 1 cup of plant-based protein foods each week like soy (tofu, edamame) or legumes (kidney, pinto, black beans, and lentils) in place of lean animal protein.

Limit your cholesterol intake to <200 mg per day.

Limit **egg yolks to 2 – 4 a week**; avoid **organ meats** like liver and gizzards, **fatty red meats, butter, and full-fat dairy products.**

Prepare foods by baking, grilling, broiling, stir-frying, boiling, steaming, or poaching.



Why Choose a Vegetarian/Vegan-Style Eating Pattern?

A vegetarian or vegan eating pattern is one way to eat heart-healthy. Eating a vegetarian or vegan-style food pattern can help decrease your LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels and reduce your blood pressure. In fact, research studies have shown that vegetarians have an overall lower risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and some types of cancer.

The Basics of Vegetarian Eating Patterns

A heart-healthy vegetarian or vegan eating pattern includes vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, and low-fat (1%) or fat-free dairy products or dairy alternatives. Legumes, lentils, and soy foods provide protein. Choose healthy vegetable oils and other foods high in healthy fats, and limit sugary foods and sugar-sweetened drinks. Some people only eat plant-based foods (vegans). Other people choose to eat eggs and low-fat dairy with their plant-based foods (lacto-ovo vegetarians). Still other people eat fish with their plant-based eating pattern (pescetarians). Choosing which type of vegetarian eating pattern to follow is up to each person.

Tips for Eating More Plant-Based Foods

Eat lots of vegetables. Fill at least $\frac{1}{2}$ your plate with a variety of brightly colored vegetables ... think colors of the rainbow.

Choose plant-based protein. Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with soy (tofu, edamame, textured soy protein) or legumes (kidney, pinto, and black beans) and lentils. Choose a soy burger or veggie burger instead of a hamburger or turkey burger. Use beans and lentils in casseroles, pasta dishes, soups, and salads instead of meat.

Accent foods with healthy fats, like extra-virgin olive oil in cooking and with salads, avocado slices on salads or tofu wraps, and 1 oz. a day of many kinds of unsalted nuts or seeds with meals and as snacks.



Choose fiber-rich whole grains.

Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with brown and wild rice, barley, bulgur, quinoa, other whole grains, or starchy vegetables, like green peas, sweet potatoes, yams, corn, and winter squash. Choose whole-grain breads and cereals, including oats.

Choose many kinds of fruits,

like fresh and frozen fruits with no added sugar or dried fruit for dessert.

Choose healthy dairy alternatives,

like fortified soy, rice, or almond milk with no added sugar instead of cow's milk. Replace cheese with soy cheese.

Vegetarian/Vegan Meal Ideas

There are many ways to make vegetarian meals. Some ideas are:

- **Breakfast:** Oatmeal, whole-wheat toast with almond butter, and berries; soy milk with no added sugar; coffee or tea with no sugar; and water to drink.
- **Lunch:** Baked tofu in a whole-wheat wrap with arugula, olives, mustard, and cucumber; navy bean soup; fresh apple; and water or other calorie-free beverage to drink.
- **Snacks:** Raw almonds and seeds; fresh, raw cut-up vegetables; fresh fruit; and water to drink.
- **Dinner:** Vegan pumpkin and black bean chili with onions, low-sodium diced tomatoes and spices, whole-grain roll, seasonal fresh fruit, and fortified almond milk with no added sugar or water to drink.

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