



# Mediterranean Diet

Foods at the bottom of the pyramid should be eaten more often. Foods at the top of the pyramid should be eaten less often.

Choose everyday:

- ✓ 100% Whole grains
- ✓ Fruits
- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Beans, lentils, nuts
- ✓ Olive oil
- ✓ Low fat dairy

Choose weekly:

- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Chicken
- ✓ Eggs

Choose monthly:

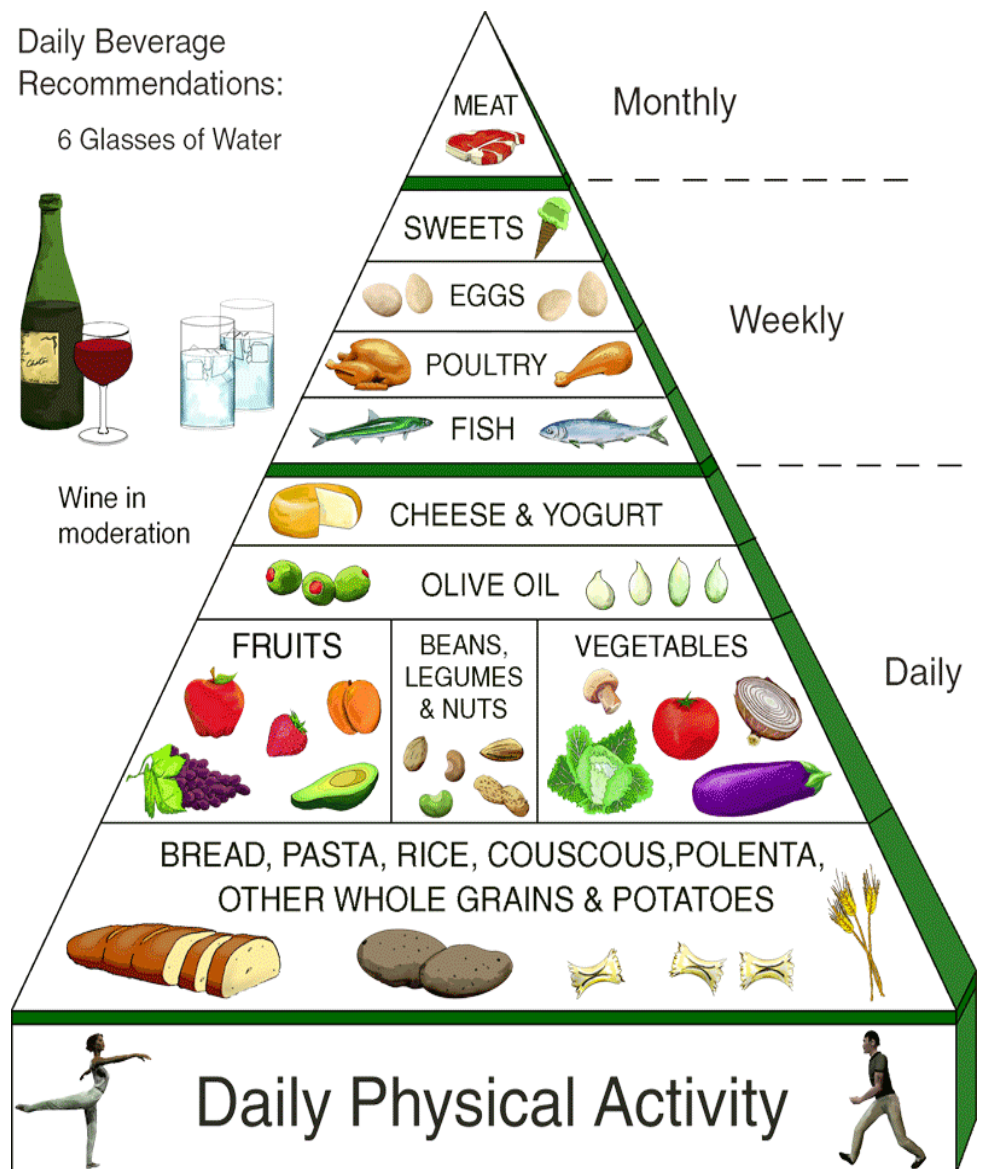
- ✓ Red meats

Also....

- ✓ Drink 6-8 cups of water daily
- ✓ Alcohol in moderation
  - Men (1-2 drink/day)
  - Women (0-1 drink/day)

1 drink= 12oz beer, 4oz wine, 1.5oz spirits

## The Traditional Healthy Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



## The Research....

**British Medical Journal**  
Reviewed all the Mediterranean diet research from 1966-2008, and reported that a **greater adherence** is associated with improved health status, including a decrease in:

- ✦ Overall mortality by 9%
- ✦ Mortality from CVD by 9%
- ✦ Incidence of or mortality from cancer by 6%
- ✦ Incidence of Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease by 13%

(*BMJ* 2008;337:a1344)

## Lyon's Heart Study

Compared the Mediterranean diet with a typical heart healthy diet in 605 patients who had already had a heart attack. The Mediterranean group showed a:

- ✦ 70% reduction in overall mortality
- ✦ 81% reduction in cardiac mortality

(*Circulation*. 1999; 99:779-785.)

## How does the diet work?



First, this isn't your typical *diet* it's a lifestyle! The pyramid emphasizes healthy sources of fat, a very low intake of saturated and trans fat, a high fibre intake, and a high intake of fruits and vegetables.

## Healthy Choices Everyday!

**Physical Activity** is at the base of the pyramid, which means that activity should be part of your everyday life. Regular exercise can include walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, skipping, and recreational sports and leisure activities.



**Grains** are the second largest group. Grains break down into simple sugars, which our body and brain use for fuel. You should choose *whole* grains over *white* grain products more often. Whole grains are packed with protein, fibre, B vitamins, and iron.

**Fruits & Vegetables** are packed with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre! Fresh fruits and vegetables are very desirable, but frozen and canned are also good choices during certain seasons or if you are on a budget.



**Legumes** (beans, peas, & lentils) are high in protein, folate, potassium, iron, and magnesium. They are also an excellent source of soluble fibre which helps to lower blood sugars and cholesterol.

**Nuts & Seeds** should be a part of your regular diet. They help reduce LDL (bad cholesterol) and increase HDL (good cholesterol) and are packed with nutrients, healthy fats, and energy. You need to watch your portion sizes, because nuts are high in calories. A healthy portion of nuts is 10 almonds, 5 walnuts, or 15 shelled pistachios.

**Olive Oil** is the major source of added fat rather than butter or lard, but don't worry because it's a healthy fat which helps to lower LDL (bad cholesterol) and increase HDL (good cholesterol), which is essential for the prevention of cardiovascular disease.



**Cheese & Yogurt** are great dairy choices to compliment daily milk consumption. All dairy has some saturated fat (bad fats that can damage your heart), so it is important to choose low fat dairy products. The fat in dairy is called milk fat (M.F. %), try 0-2% milk, 0-3% yogurt, and less than 25% cheeses more often.

## ZINCAGE Study

Explored the effect of the Mediterranean diet on inflammation in 950 people over 60 years old. They found that the more olive oil consumed the lower the levels of inflammatory markers. They also found that the more red meats consumed the higher the levels of inflammatory markers.

*(ClinChemLabMed2 2008;46(7): 990-996)*

## Nurses Health Study

Followed 84,000 nurses from the USA for 16 years. Researchers found that intake of fatty fish was inversely related to fatal and non fatal cardiovascular events (e.g. heart attacks and stroke) and deaths.

*(JAMA 2002;287:1815 – 21)*

*There is a large body of research that focuses on the Mediterranean diet and the link between nutrition and health. For more information, speak to your registered dietitian.*

## Weekly vs Daily Choices

There are certain foods that you should eat regularly, but not on a daily basis. Eating foods on a weekly basis means that you should eat them on 1-3 days of the week.

**Fish & Seafood** should be eaten 2-3 times/week. Try fattier fish like salmon, mackerel, or sardines that are high in omega-3 fatty acids. White fish doesn't have the healthy fat, but it is low in calories and not as fishy tasting.



**Poultry** is an excellent protein source! It includes chicken, duck, goose, turkey, and pheasant. These white meats have less fat than red meat because they are not marbled with fat and the skin can easily be removed. Poultry fat is not healthy like fish fat is.

**Eggs** are packed with nutrients, including protein, iron, and B vitamins. People used to avoid eggs because they contain cholesterol, then research showed that dietary cholesterol doesn't affect blood levels of cholesterol in most people. Now we know that it is the large amount of saturated fat (found in the yolk) that increases LDL (bad cholesterol). Eggs should not be eaten daily, but a few times per week is okay.

**Sweets & treats** are a okay in moderation for most people. Although, people with chronic diseases, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, should avoid sweets and treats.

## Only on a Monthly Basis

**Red meats** include beef, pork, goat and lamb. You should only be eating these meats 1-2 a month. There is some research to show that diets high in red meat can lead to cancer. We also know that red meat is hard for our bodies to digest and it is high in saturated fat.

## Alcohol in moderation

If you do not already drink alcohol regularly, we do not recommend that you start. Research on alcohol consumption is controversial, while many promote the regular consumption of red wine others have found that alcohol consumption can lead to diseases of body organs and cancer. Diets that are high in fruits and vegetables provide plenty of protective antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.

**For more information and advice contact your registered dietitian  
Marg Alfieri, RD**

