GETTING STARTED GUIDE

Mediterranean Diet

DUMIES

Savor the benefits of a Mediterranean lifestyle!

- Zesty flavors, such as tumeric, basil and lemon!
 - Less meat, more fish, and fresh, colorful vegetables
 - More relaxed, community focused table habits





The Mediterranean diet is a modern set of guidelines inspired by traditional diet patterns of southern Italy, the Greek island of Crete, and other parts of Greece during the 1960s. Today, the cuisines of Morocco and Spain are included. It's all about slowing down our fast-paced way of living, interacting with others, and eating.

Choosing a Mediterranean diet isn't going to be a traditional "diet" or a quick fix. Rather, it's a series of healthy lifestyle choices that can get you to your weight loss goal while you eat delicious, flavorful foods and get out and enjoy life. Sounds much better than counting calories and depriving yourself, right? You can incorporate these changes into your daily life and create long-term habits that bring you not only weight loss but also sustained weight loss.

A fast-paced lifestyle is part of reality today, but it also contradicts one of the premises of a Mediterranean lifestyle. When incorporating the Mediterranean diet into your lifestyle, your first goal is to try to slow down.

Loading up your Mediterranean pantry

A well-organized and well-stocked food supply gives you the ability to make more food from scratch when you want to slow down or to throw together fast meals when you're short on time. Here is a good pantry list to get you started:

- ✓ Oils, including olive oil, extra-virgin olive oil, and nonstick cooking spray
- Seasonings, including salt, sea salt, black pepper, ground cumin, paprika, garlic powder, chili powder, curry powder, ginger, cinnamon, dill, parsley, tarragon, basil, oregano, thyme, turmeric, saffron, rosemary, and your choice of other dry herbs
- Canned and/or dried beans, such as black beans, pinto beans, or white beans
- Lentils
- ✓ Canned soups, such as minestrone, vegetable, or tomato
- Rice, including wild rice and brown rice
- ✓ Pearl barley, quinoa, or bulgur wheat
- ✓ Pasta
- Oatmeal
- Cornmeal

Managing stress

Although diet is a big component of the health benefits experienced in the Mediterranean, all the lifestyle patterns combined, including physical activity and relaxation, may provide insight into the health benefits found in this region. Stress releases hormones that trigger the "fight or flight" response (where your body gears up its energy levels for a big event like fighting or fleeing) and kick on your hunger hormones. Biologically, this concept makes sense. How are you supposed to fight like a warrior or run to the hills with no fuel? The body is working as it's supposed to. The increase in stress is what's leading to more hunger and food cravings.

Try to limit or prevent stressful situations in your life. Some things you can't help, like work-related stress, but you can certainly prevent stress in other ways, like saying "no" more often if you have too much going on or avoiding unnecessary confrontations by letting the small stuff in life go.

Getting a good dose of daily activity

Historically, the people in the rural Mediterranean got plenty of daily activity through work, getting to where they needed to go on foot, and having fun. Although you may rely heavily on your car and think this lifestyle isn't realistic for you, you can still find ways to incorporate both aerobic exercise (which gets your heart rate up) and strength-training exercises regularly.



Walking encompasses both aerobic and strength training and helps relieve stress. If you live close to markets or restaurants, challenge yourself to walk to them rather than drive, or simply focus on taking a walk each day to unwind.

Enjoying time with friends and family

Community spirit is a large part of the Mediterranean culture and is something that's disappearing in many culture. Getting together on a regular basis with friends and family is an important priority for providing a sense of strong community and fun. The fun and laughter that come with friendly get-togethers are vital for stress management. Without these little joyful experiences, stress can tip to an unhealthy balance.



Although taking time for a large, relaxing meal sounds like one of those optional strategies you can skip, keep in mind that even small lifestyle choices can make a very big impact on overall health. Family dinners can help you clear your head from work and provide enjoyment through good food and conversation. If you're go, go, go all day at work, prioritizing family meal time can be priceless for your daily stress management.

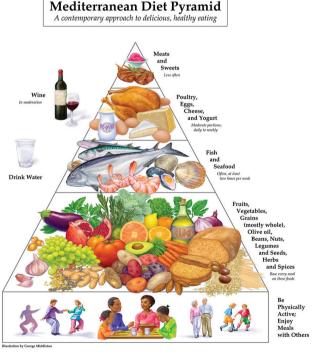
Taking portion size into account

Paying attention to portion sizes is a far better way to decrease your calorie intake than counting calories. Portion sizes in the Mediterranean are different than they are in the United States, which is one reason folks in the Mediterranean region tend to manage their weights more effectively.

Here's an example of what a Mediterranean style meal may look like:

- ✓ 2 ounces (56 g) of grilled lemon chicken
- \checkmark 3 cup (125 g) of wild rice, black bean, and fresh herb mixture
- 2 cups (300 mg) mixed green salad with sliced tomatoes and radishes with 1 tablespoon vinaigrette salad dressing
- \checkmark ½ cup (75 g) grilled zucchini

This large meal contains several vegetable servings, and the estimated calorie level is about 500 calories. Compare that to an 8-ounce chicken breast with 2 cups of rice and a small vegetable; that calorie level is about 680 calories.









First Week: Understanding How to Eat

In addition to helping with weight loss, the Mediterranean diet can play a role in preventing and fighting heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Note that a healthy diet, exercise, and stress management can significantly reduce your risk of certain diseases, but nothing can bring a guarantee. Genetic components also play a role with chronic diseases. However, if you have family history of heart disease, diabetes, or cancer, incorporating these lifestyle and diet changes into your daily life can help you decrease those risks.



The Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is more than just about "diet": it's really more of a way of life that, along with a healthful food plan, incorporates regular physical activity and time for rest, community, and fun. The Mediterranean diet invites you to slow down and approach life in a more intentional, relaxed way.

Focusing on plant-based foods

People in the Mediterranean eat a lot of plantbased foods (five to nine daily servings of fruits and vegetables) and depend less on prepackaged convenience foods. (To compare, Americans eat about three servings of fruits and vegetables a day on average.). A plant-based diet such as the Mediterranean diet offers a plethora of nutrients that can help your body stay healthy.

Eating healthy fats

Although Mediterranean residents don't consume a low-fat diet, their dietary pattern is considered heart-healthy. How can that be? Not all fats are created equal. People in the Mediterranean consume more of the healthier types of fats (monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated omega-3 fatty acids) and less of the omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids and saturated fats other cultures tend to overload on. Instead of focusing on total fat intake, these folks maintain a healthier ratio of these different groups of fats than you see in the United States.



To start rebalancing your fat ratio, limit your use of fats such as butter and lard in cooking and use more olive oils or avocadoes for spreads.

Fighting free radicals with antioxidants

Antioxidants are a key component of many plant foods that help decrease damage to your cells, tissues, and DNA. Eating a diet high in antioxidants such as vitamin C, vitamin E, and betacarotene means better protection for your body and overall health.

You don't have to look far to get antioxidants into your diet. You can find plenty of antioxidants in fruits and vegetables. If you're eating only one to three servings of fruits and vegetables per day, you need to increase your intake to take advantage of the produce's antioxidants. Tomatoes, grapefruit, and kale are just three popular foods that are rich in antioxidants.

Boosting your fiber intake

"Eat more fiber." You've probably seen this message in advertisements and the media. You can get all the fiber you need by eating the Mediterranean way, focusing on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Fiber helps maintain a healthy gastrointestinal tract, it lowers total cholesterol and bad cholesterol levels, and it slows the absorption of sugars you consume from carbohydrate foods, which helps keep blood sugar stable. This function is important for those who have insulin resistance diseases, such as diabetes or PCOS, and helps people manage their weights more effectively. Fiber also acts as a natural appetite suppressant, helping you to feel full and satisfied after a meal.

Eating smaller amounts of protein

Meat is typically a side dish in the Mediterranean diet; when meat does serve as the main dish, it's in a smaller portion size than you're probably used to. The goal is to eat less animal protein and more plant-based protein.



If you feel like this lifestyle isn't for you, consider going halfway. Eating your normal portions of meat two to three days a week and going a more Mediterranean route on the other days may work better for you.

Eating fish

Seafood is a weekly staple in the Mediterranean diet, and with good reason. It's a great source of those coveted omega-3 fatty acids. Check out www. montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx for a list of recommended fish in your region. This guide is a great tool to help you choose local fish with low contaminants and also to protect against overfishing.

Understanding the importance of wine

Drinking more red wine, like many people in the Mediterranean coast do, may be one reason you're excited about switching to a Mediterranean diet. Red wine has certain properties that research has shown are beneficial for heart health. If you drink alcohol in moderation, add a little red wine in place of other alcoholic beverages.

The cardio protection red wine provides is attributed to the antioxidants from flavonoids found in the skin of the grapes. Flavonoids reduce your risk of heart disease by:

- ✓ Lowering bad cholesterol
- Increasing good cholesterol
- Reducing blood clotting

Though in early stages of research, the flavonoid called resveratrol may have additional benefits, such as inhibiting tumor development in certain cancers. (If you're not a fan of red wine, drinking grape juice made from Concord grapes and eating purple grapes also provide similar heart-health benefits.)



First Month: Living the Mediterranean Lifestyle

What differentiates the eating habits of people living on the Mediterranean coast and other cultures is actually quite subtle. The changes may be small, but they make a significant difference for weight management, health, and well-being. And although you may be invested in living the whole Mediterranean lifestyle, you're still probably pretty busy. Fortunately, we have tips on how you can live this new lifestyle and still stay on task with everything else you need to do.

Keeping a Mediterranean kitchen

Keep your kitchen well stocked. That way, you always have Mediterranean on hand for throwing together whatever meal strikes your fancy. The accompanying table shows you what types of food are typically found in the four main types of Mediterranean cuisine.

Common Mediterranean Flavors by Region		
Region	Commonly Used Ingredients	Overall Cuisine Flavor
Southern Italy	Anchovies, balsamic vinegar, basil, bay leaf, capers, garlic, mozzarella cheese, olive oil, oregano, parsley, peppers, pine nuts, mushrooms, prosciutto, rosemary, sage, thyme, tomatoes	Italian food is rich and savory, with strongly flavored ingredients. Look for tomato-based sauces and even an occasional kick of spicy heat.
Greece	Basil, cucumbers, dill, fennel, feta cheese, garlic, honey, lemon, mint, olive oil, oregano, yogurt	Greek cooking runs the gamut from tangy with citrus accents to savory. Ingredients such as feta cheese add a strong, bold flavor, while yogurt helps provide a creamy texture and soft flavor
Morocco	Cinnamon, cumin, dried fruits, ginger, lemon, mint, paprika, parsley, pepper, saffron, turmeric	Moroccan cooking uses exotic flavors that encompass both sweet and savory, often in one dish. The food has strong flavors but isn't necessarily spicy.
Spain	Almonds, anchovies, cheeses (from goats, cows, and sheep), garlic, ham, honey, olive oil, onions, oregano, nuts, paprika, rosemary, saffron, thyme	Regardless of what part of Spain you're in, you can always count on garlic and olive oil setting the stage for a flavorful dish. Spanish dishes are often inspired by Arabic and Roman cuisine with emphasis on fresh seafood. You often find combinations of savory and sweet flavors, such as a seafood stew using sweet paprika.

Time saving suggestions

Make meals ahead of time for later in the week or for freezing. Chop up a bunch of fresh veggies and prepare some simple grains like rice, quinoa, or barley at the beginning of the week to have on hand throughout the week so you can cut down your cooking time after your busy day.

Follow the great Mediterranean strategy of using fresh, raw produce with your meals. Sometimes cooking takes up too much time. Add unadorned veggies such as sliced tomatoes and cucumbers or carrot sticks to your plate. Focus on easy-to-prepare meals for every day and use the more labor-intensive cooking for special occasions.

To get more plant-based foods on your plate, work to get one to two fruits and/ or veggies (in a rainbow of colors) into each meal, and use beans or lentils as your protein several times a week. Meats and starchy carbohydrates become your side dishes. Think about all the fresh flavors of the Mediterranean and try putting some items together. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ✓ Soup and sandwich: The standby of grilled cheese sandwich and tomato soup is appropriate for lunch or dinner. Why stop at just the tomato soup, though? We say add as many veggies as you love; throw some fresh basil and tomato onto to your sandwich and include a side salad along with your meal.
- ✓ Salads, salads: We recommend always having salad greens on hand because they can make a quick side dish or a whole meal. Add as many veggies and fruits as you can find and top with a protein, such as nuts, beans, hard-boiled egg, or leftover chicken or fish. Add a roll or slice of toast, and you have a quick, light meal for a busy evening.
- ✓ Rice and beans: Top brown rice with your favorite beans (try black or pinto), chopped fresh tomatoes, bell peppers, and whatever else you love. Sprinkle with some goat cheese or feta cheese, and you have delicious fast food with lots of fresh produce! For extra flavor, add some fresh herbs such as cilantro or basil.
- Scrambled eggs: Eggs with a slice of toast can work for any meal of the day. Sauté vegetables such as onions, zucchini, bell peppers, tomatoes, and spinach, and add them to your eggs. Top with a little salsa for some kick!
- Leftovers: Don't underestimate your leftovers. Think outside the box on how to utilize them the next day. Maybe you just have some cooked barley leftover? Combine it with some beans and veggies. Grilled chicken leftover? Slice it up and add it to a salad. Grilled vegetables left over? Put them in a tortilla with beans and cheese. You can make some quick, creative lunches and dinners from leftovers.



Zucchini (Courgettes) and Goat Cheese Frittata

Prep time: 30 min • Cook time: 20 min • Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

2 medium zucchinis (courgettes)

8 eggs

2 tablespoons milk

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 clove garlic, crushed

2 ounces (60 g) goat cheese, crumbled

Directions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees (175°C) . Slice the zucchinis (courgettes) into %-inch (6mm)-thick round slices. In a large bowl whisk the eggs with the milk, salt, and pepper.
- 2 In a heavy, ovenproof skillet (preferably cast iron), heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add the zucchini (courgette) slices and cook for 5 minutes.
- Pour the whisked eggs over the zucchini and stir for 1 minute. Top with the cheese and transfer to the oven. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until the eggs are set. Remove the pan from the oven and let sit for 3 minutes.
- Transfer the frittata to a cutting board, slice into four pie wedges, and serve hot or at room temperature.

Vary It! You can use yellow squash in place of the zucchini (courgettes).

Per serving: Calories 134 (From Fat 72); Fat 8g (Saturated 3g); Cholesterol 11mg; Sodium 324mg; Carbohydrate 4g (Dietary Fiber 1g); Protein 12g.



Greek Salad

Prep time: 12 min • Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

8 cups (1 kg) romaine lettuce, torn into bite-sized pieces

4 medium tomatoes

2 medium cucumbers, seeded and diced

1/2 cup (75 g) kalamata olives, pitted and chopped

6 green onions (spring onions), chopped

1/4 cup (40 g) fresh flat leaf parsley, chopped

Juice of 1 large lemon

1/3 cup (80 mL) olive oil

1 clove garlic, minced

Salt and pepper to taste

4 ounces (75 g) crumbled feta cheese

Directions

- Place the torn lettuce leaves into a large salad bowl. Slice the tomatoes into 8 wedges each and place on top of the lettuce. Add the cucumbers, olives, green onions (spring onions), and parsley.
- 2 In a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, olive oil, and garlic. Season the dressing with salt and pepper to taste. Pour over the salad and toss. Sprinkle the salad with the feta cheese and serve immediately.

Tip: Use prewashed/pre-torn bagged romaine lettuce from your local grocery store to save a little time.

Per serving: Calories 264 (From Fat 194); Fat 22g (Saturated 5g); Cholesterol 17mg; Sodium 280mg; Carbohydrate 16g (Dietary Fiber 5g); Protein 6g.



Tomato Basil Soup

Prep time: 18 min • Cook time: 50 min • Yield: 8 servings

Ingredients

4 pounds (2 kg) tomatoes, halved across the hemisphere

2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons olive oil

11/2 teaspoons sea salt

1 large onion, chopped

6 cloves garlic, sliced

4 cups (950 mL) low-sodium vegetable or chicken stock

1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 tablespoon butter

Salt and pepper, to taste

 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (75 g) basil, sliced thinly

1/2 cup (45 g) freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

- Heat the grill or grill pan over high heat to 400 degrees (200°C). Remove the tomato seeds; brush the tomato halves with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and sprinkle them with salt. Grill skin side down for 15 to 20 minutes or until slightly blackened.
- 2 Meanwhile, heat the remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil in a large stock pot over medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and sauté for 4 minutes. Pour in the stock, red pepper flakes, and roasted tomatoes.
- 3 Bring the stock to a boil and reduce the heat to a simmer for 30 minutes. Add the butter and stir until melted. Blend the soup in a blender or in the pot with a stick blender until it's the desired texture.
- In the pot, season the blended soup with salt and pepper to taste. Divide the soup into eight bowls, top each serving with 1 tablespoon of sliced basil and 1 tablespoon of Parmesan, and serve.

Tip: If you're using a traditional blender, blend the soup in small (1-to-2-cup (240 mL-475 mL)) batches to avoid splattering soup everywhere.

Per serving: Calories 233 (From Fat 126); Fat 14g (Saturated 4g); Cholesterol 12mg; Sodium 967mg; Carbohydrate 22g (Dietary Fiber 6g); Protein 7g.



Spanish Lentils with Vegetables

Prep time: 15 min • Cook time: 45 min • Yield: 8 servings

Ingredients

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium onion, diced

3 cloves garlic, mashed

4 ounces (113 g) Spanish chorizo or Portuguese sausage (linguiça)

2 cups (380 g) dried red lentils

1 medium tomato, diced

2 medium carrots, sliced in ½-inch (15 mm) rounds

1 large potato, cut in 1-inch (2.5 cm) cubes

4 cups (950 mL) low-sodium chicken stock

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

1 bay leaf

Salt to taste

Directions

- In a 4-quart (3.8L) saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté for 2 minutes.
- Add the sausage and cook for 5 minutes. Add the dried lentils, chopped tomatoes, carrots, and potatoes and sauté for 3 minutes.
- **3** Pour the stock over the vegetable mixture, season with the cumin, paprika, and bay leaf, and bring mixture to a boil. Drop the temperature to medium-low and simmer the lentil mixture for 30 minutes or until tender. Season with salt to taste, remove the bay leaf, and serve.

Per serving: Calories 353 (From Fat 112); Fat 12g (Saturated 3g); Cholesterol 12mg; Sodium 234mg; Carbohydrate 43g (Dietary Fiber 7g); Protein 19g.



Zesty Mediterranean Flank Steak

Prep time: 30 min, plus marinating time • Cook time: 20 min • Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

Zest and juice of 1 lemon, plus 1 tablespoon juice

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, minced

4 cloves garlic, minced

1/4 cup (60 mL) plus 1 tablespoon olive oil

1/4 teaspoon sea salt

2 pounds (900 g) flank steak, trimmed of excess fat

2 avocados, cubed

2 tomatoes, cubed

1/4 cup (40 g) parsley, chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- 1 Whisk together the lemon juice (minus 1 tablespoon) and zest, rosemary, garlic, ¼ cup (60 mL) of the olive oil, and the sea salt in a small bowl.
- **2** Pour the mixture over the meat in a glass dish and flip the meat to coat; cover and marinate in the refrigerator for 2 to 12 hours.
- Heat the grill over medium-high heat. Combine the avocados, tomatoes, parsley, and remaining lemon juice and olive oil. Allow the flavors to blend at room temperature while the meat cooks.
- Grill the meat for 6 to 8 minutes until it reaches the desired doneness (3 to 4 minutes on one side and 2 minutes on the other). Remove the meat from the heat and cover with foil for at least 5 minutes before slicing.
- 5 Slice the meat on the bias for serving. Season the tomato and avocado mixture with salt and pepper and divide evenly over each flank steak serving.

Per serving: Calories 350 (From Fat 192); Fat 21g (Saturated 7g); Cholesterol 92mg; Sodium 191mg; Carbohydrate 8g (Dietary Fiber 4g); Protein 32g.



Halibut with Olives and Capers

Prep time: 8 min • Cook time: 30 min • Yield: 8 servings

Ingredients

2 pounds (900 g) halibut, cut into approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (3.5 cm) pieces

Salt and pepper to taste

Two 15-ounce (450 mL) cans crushed tomatoes, drained

1 large onion, coarsely chopped

1 cup (150 g) kalamata olives, pitted and halved

1/2 cup (75 g) fresh parsley, chopped

2 tablespoons (30 mL) capers, drained

6 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced

1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced

1/2 cup (120 mL) white wine

1/4 cup (60 mL) olive oil

1/2 cup (75 g) crumbled feta cheese

Directions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400 degrees (200°C).
- 2 Place the fish into a baking pan and season with the salt and pepper. Combine the tomatoes, onions, olives, parsley, capers, garlic, bell peppers, white wine, and olive oil.
- **3** Pour the sauce over the fish. Bake the fish for 30 minutes or until it flakes easily with a fork. Sprinkle with the feta and serve.

Vary It! In Step 2, blend the sauce until smooth and put aside. Bake the fish without the sauce and then pour the blended sauce over the cooked fish and top with the feta.

Per serving: Calories 288 (From Fat 120); Fat 13g (Saturated 3g); Cholesterol 45mg; Sodium 538mg; Carbohydrate 13g (Dietary Fiber 3g); Protein 27g.



Other Resources

Mediterranean Diet Resources





Books for Fitness and Healthful Lifestyle

Mindfulness For Dummies
Fitness Walking For Dummies
Mind-Body Fitness For Dummies
Weight Training For Dummies
Cross-Training For Dummies
Core Strength For Dummies
Pilates For Dummies
Exercise Balls For Dummies

Books for Nutrition and Diet

Cooking with Quinoa For Dummies **Belly Fat Diet For Dummies** Flat Belly Cookbook For Dummies Cooking with Chia For Dummies The Calorie Counter For Dummies **Green Smoothies For Dummies** Gluten-Free Cooking For Dummies, 2nd Ed. Gluten-Free Baking For Dummies Living Gluten-Free For Dummies, 2nd Ed. Living Wheat-Free For Dummies **Plant-Based Diet For Dummies Cooking with Spices For Dummies** Celiac Disease For Dummies **Diabetes Meal Planning and Nutrition For Dummies Beating Sugar Addiction For Dummies Glycemic Index For Dummies**

Mediterranean Diet Recipes

Find dozens of delicious recipes like these four (and more!):

Tzatziki Sauce

Greek Meatballs with Lemon Sauce

Classic Gyros and Pitas

Chicken Classics from Southern Italy

Mediterranean Diet Cheat Sheets

Mediterranean Diet For Dummies
Following the Eating Principles of the
Mediterranean Diet

Articles

Six Myths about the Mediterranean Diet Why a Mediterranean Diet Is Better for Heart Health Phytochemicals and the Mediterranean Diet Battle Diabetes with the Mediterranean Diet Dozens of articles on adopting the Mediterranean diet can be found at Dummies.com