

Diet and Secondary Cardiovascular Disease Prevention



The Mediterranean Diet

For the 6th year, the Mediterranean diet has been named the number one overall best diet by U.S. News & World Report.¹ The Mediterranean diet focuses on eating whole foods like seafood, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, beans, and olive oil.

The Mediterranean diet has been heavily researched and proven helpful in preventing cardiovascular disease. In addition to the positive impact of the Mediterranean diet on primary prevention, the diet is also beneficial for individuals with existing cardiovascular disease. In a trial published in *The Lancet*, researchers found that participants with coronary heart disease who were assigned to the Mediterranean diet experienced fewer cardiovascular events than those who were assigned to a low-fat diet.² The researchers concluded that the Mediterranean diet should be used as a tool in the secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease.²



The Big Picture

There are many diets, such as the Mediterranean diet, Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH diet), Keto diet, Vegan diet, Vegetarian diet, Ornish diet, and many more. With so many diet options, deciding what diet to follow can be challenging.

Whether you decide to follow a diet or not, it is important to incorporate healthy eating habits into your daily life. Some whole foods to incorporate more of are:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Seafood
- Lean-cut meats
- Low-fat or fat-free dairy products
- Whole grains
- Nuts
- Legumes and beans

Deciding to eat healthier comes with limiting or eliminating foods and beverages that can contribute to adverse health outcomes. Some foods and beverages to eat less of are:

- Sweets
- Foods high in sodium
- Foods or beverages with added sugar
- Red meats
- Refined grains
- Alcohol
- Foods with high amounts of saturated fats

Meal Planning and Prepping

Although you may intend to eat healthier, your daily commitments and obligations may cause you to choose convenience eating, such as restaurant meals or ready-to-eat food. Planning and prepping meals may help you overcome this obstacle.

Meal planning consists of the steps you take before cooking your meals.³ First, decide what you will eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks and what recipes you will use, if any. You can eat the same meals for the entire week or different meals throughout the week. When deciding what to eat, consider how well your chosen meals will last in the refrigerator and freezer and if the food heats up nicely. Next, check your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry for ingredients you already have. Lastly, list the ingredients you need and visit the grocery store.

After planning your meals, it is time to prep.⁴ You can cook and store meals for the entire week at once or throughout the week. Additionally, you can cook components of meals (e.g., proteins, vegetables, and starches) and combine them when it is time to eat. If you like eating food right after cooking it, you can prepare the ingredients beforehand and cook meals when you are going to eat them.



References

1. U.S. News & World Report. U.S. News Reveals the 2023 Best Diets. Usnews.com. Published January 3, 2023. Accessed April 25, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/info/blogs/press-room/articles/2023-01-03/2023-best-diets>.
2. Delgado-Lista J, Alcalá-Díaz JF, Torres-Peña JD, et al. Long-term secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease with a Mediterranean diet and a low-fat diet (CORDIOPREV): A randomised controlled trial. *Lancet*. 2022;399(10338):1876-1885. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(22)00122-2.
3. Kitchn. What's the Difference Between Meal Planning and Meal Prep? Thekitchn.com. Published January 11, 2018. Accessed May 4, 2023. <https://www.thekitchn.com/whats-the-difference-between-meal-planning-and-meal-prep-252953>.
4. Kitchn. The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Meal Prep. Thekitchn.com. Accessed May 4, 2023. <https://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-meal-prep-beginner-261658>.

Additional Resources

Meal Prep Plan: How I Prep a Week of Mediterranean Diet Meals Kitchn - <https://www.thekitchn.com/mediterranean-diet-meal-plan-266965>

30-Day Mediterranean Diet Breakfast Plan Eating Well - <https://www.eatingwell.com/gallery/8036835/30-day-mediterranean-diet-breakfast-plan/>

30 Days of Mediterranean Diet Lunches Eating Well - <https://www.eatingwell.com/gallery/8041642/30-days-of-mediterranean-diet-lunches/>

60 Mediterranean Diet Recipes You Can Make in No Time PureWow - <https://www.purewow.com/food/mediterranean-diet-dinner-recipes>

Low-Cost Farmers Market Recipes NYC Health - <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cdp/stellar-farmers-markets-recipes.pdf>

Eat More Color American Heart Association - https://www.heart.org/-/media/AHA/H4GM/PDF-Files/Eat_More_Color_infographic.pdf

Here's Your Shopping List to Start the Mediterranean Diet Popsugar - <https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/Mediterranean-Diet-Shopping-List-44805673#photo-44805678>

Which diet should you consider trying? Which should you avoid? Straight Talk Newsletter, The Texas Heart Institute - <https://www.texasheart.org/heart-health/womens-heart-health/straight-talk-newsletter/is-diet-a-part-of-your-new-years-resolutions/>

Nutrition The Texas Heart Institute - <https://www.texasheart.org/heart-health/heart-information-center/topics/nutrition/>

What is MyPlate? U.S. Department of Agriculture - <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>

Interactive Nutrition Facts Label U.S. Food & Drug Administration - <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/InteractiveNutritionFactsLabel/default.cfm>



Disclaimer

The information in *Diet and Secondary Cardiovascular Disease Prevention* has been taken from many sources. It is meant to give you information about the impact of the Mediterranean diet on secondary prevention and healthy eating habits. Still, the article does not cover all the benefits and risks. This information should not be used as medical advice. Please talk to your provider for individualized diet recommendations and instructions.