



# Mediterranean Diet

Choose foods at the bottom of the pyramid more often. Choose foods at the top of the pyramid less often.

Choose everyday:

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

Choose weekly:

- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Chicken
- ✓ Eggs

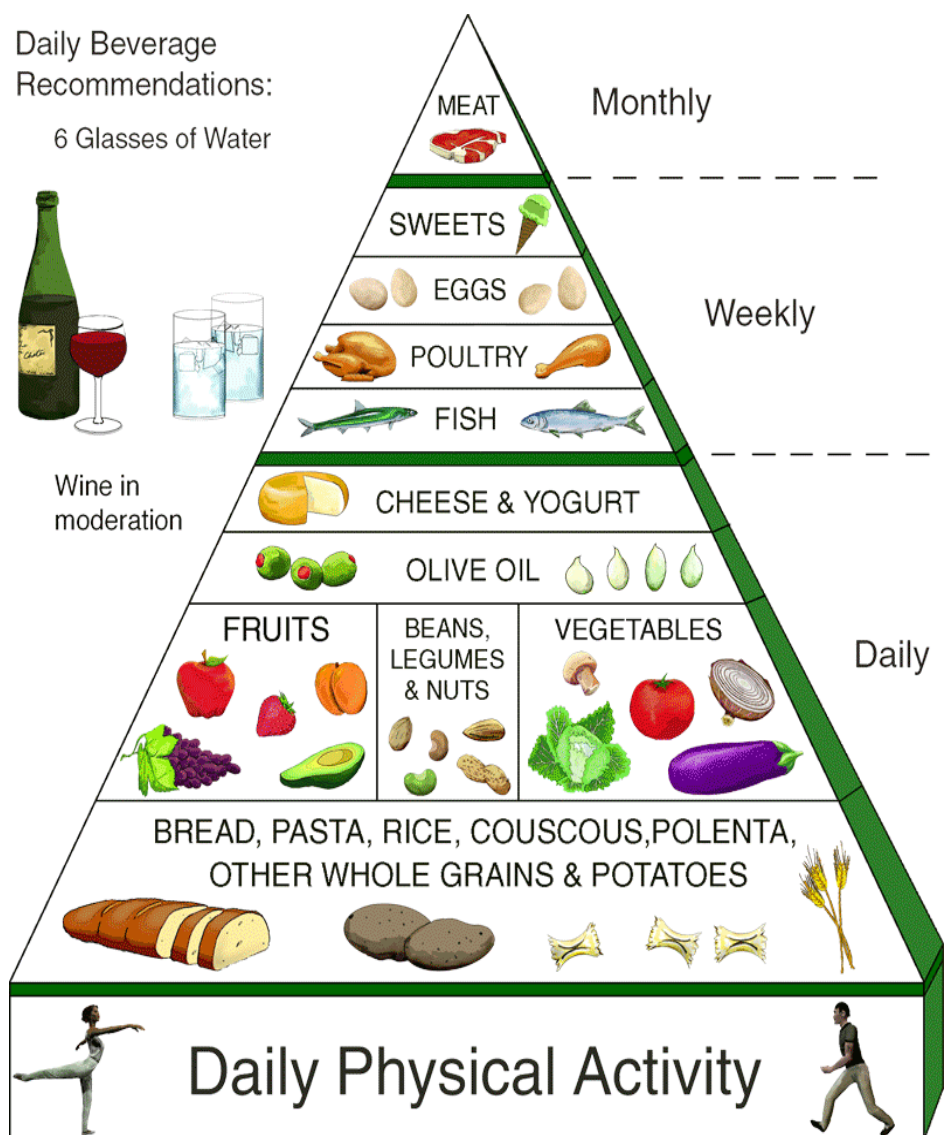
Choose monthly:

- ✓ Red meats

Also...

- ✓ Drink 6-8 cups of water daily
  - ✓ Alcohol in moderation
    - Men (max 1-2 drink/day)
    - Women (max 0-1 drink/day)
- 1 drink= 12oz beer, 4oz wine, 1.5oz spirits

## The Traditional Healthy Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



## The Research...

### Key Outcomes

A large meta-analysis of 18 studies & over 4 million people found:

- 8% reduction in overall deaths
- 10% reduction in heart related deaths
- 4% reduction in cancer related deaths

Sofi F, Macchi C, Abbate P, Gensini GF, Casini A (2014). *Health Nutr* 17(12);2769-2782.

### PREDIMED Study

This study looked at people with heart disease in a randomized control trial comparing: 1. Low fat diet 2. MedDiet with EVOO or 3. MedDiet with nuts:

### Results:

- There was a 30% reduced incidence of cardiovascular events with both MedDiet groups

Estruch R, Rose E, Salas-Savallado J, et al (2018). *N Engl J Med*, 2018 Jun 21; 378 (25): 2441-2442.  
doi:10.1056/NEJMoa1800389

*Ask your registered dietitian for a MedDiet Score tool to rate your own diet.*

## How Does the Diet Work?



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

## Healthy Choices Every Day!

**Physical Activity** is at the base of the pyramid, which means that it is important to include it each day. Regular exercise can include: walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, skipping, and recreational sports and leisure activities. Move your body in ways you enjoy!



**Grains** are the second largest group. Grains break down into simple sugars, which our body and brain use for fuel. Choose *whole* grains over *white/refined* 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 or frozen fruits and vegetables are best, but canned is also a good option during certain seasons or if you are on a tight 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 sugar and cholesterol.

**Nuts & Seeds** are great to include every day. They help reduce LDL (bad cholesterol), increase HDL (good cholesterol) and are packed with nutrients, healthy fats, and energy. Aim for a small handful which is about 10 almonds, 5 walnuts, or 15 shelled pistachios. Pair with a fruit for a balanced snack!

**Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO)** is the main source of added fat within the Mediterranean diet, instead of butter or lard. EVOO is a heart healthy fat which helps to lower LDL (bad cholesterol) and increases HDL (good cholesterol), which is important for the prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD).



**Cheese & Yogurt** are great dairy choices as they provide protein and other nutrients. All dairy has some saturated fat (which can raise cholesterol), so it is important to choose lower fat dairy products. The fat in dairy is called milk fat (M.F. %); aim for 0-2% milk, 0-3% yogurt, and less than 25% cheeses more often than higher fat varieties.



## Diabetes Prevention

The PREDIMED study found a combined (from both MedDiet groups) 52% reduced incidence of diabetes in people who followed the MedDiet with EVVO or nuts, compared with people who followed a low fat diet.

Salas-Salvado J et al. (2011).  
Diabetes Care 2011 Jan; 34(1):  
14-19.

## Cognition Study

A review of 18 studies found that greater adherence to the Mediterranean diet:

- Slowed rates of cognitive decline and conversion to Alzheimer's
- Improved functioning in memory, visual perceptions, problem solving, planning, and organizing

Front Nutr 2016;3:22

*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 to include on a weekly basis. Aim for variety in your choices and enjoy each food, 1-3 days per week.

***Fish & Seafood*** are great to eat 2-3 x/week. Choose fattier fish like salmon, mackerel, or sardines as they are high in healthy omega-3 fatty acids. White fish don't have this healthy fat, but are still good choices because they are lean 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 be easily removed. Poultry fat does not contain the healthy omega-3s that fatty fish does, so it is best to remove the visible fat on the poultry.

***Eggs*** are packed with nutrients, including protein, iron, and B vitamins. People used to avoid eggs because they contain cholesterol, however we now know that cholesterol in food doesn't have a significant effect on blood levels of cholesterol, in most people. Eggs do contain some saturated fat, so it is best to choose them a few times per week instead of every day.

***Sweets & treats*** can be enjoyed in moderation. Those living with chronic diseases, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease, may benefit from reducing their intake of these foods, as they can raise blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

## Only on a Monthly Basis

***Red meats*** include beef, pork, goat and lamb. These are limited to 1-2x per month. There is some research indicating that diets high in red meat can lead to certain types of cancers. Red meat may also be hard for our bodies to digest and it is high in saturated fat.

## Alcohol in Moderation

If you do not drink alcohol regularly, we do not recommend that you start. Although some people promote the regular consumption of red wine for some possible health benefits, it is known 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***

