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Mediterranean Diet*

The Mediterranean diet is considered by some to be one of the healthiest ways of eating in the world. Beyond a dietary approach, it's a lifestyle that pertains to the ancient customs and dietary patterns that have existed in the Mediterranean region for thousands of years.

Possibly due to a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids and low in saturated fats, the inhabitants of this region have maintained remarkable health: They have lower rates of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes when compared to the United States, Japan, and Canada.

The Mediterranean diet consists of natural, whole foods such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, nuts, dairy, and pure oils, and excludes processed and refined foods. Important lifestyle factors include the value placed on relationships, pleasure, leisure, and physical activity, which are all said to help reduce stress and contribute to physical and mental well-being.

The Mediterranean diet includes an abundance of extra virgin olive oil and seasonal fruits and vegetables as well as whole, unprocessed grains. Wild fish is highly encouraged as well as dairy products, especially from goats. It's recommended that followers consume 3-4 eggs per week, although this approach is more about intuition and less about rules. Nuts are included as snacks since they contain high amounts of satiating omega-3s. Meats and saturated fats are savored in moderation, usually on special occasions.

A large part of the Mediterranean diet is simple, such as complementary seasonings like oregano and lemon. It's recommended that wine consumption remain at 1-2 small glasses daily, and coffee is consumed moderately for pleasure and mental stimulation.

Foods to include:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Whole grain
- Fish
- Meats
- Dairy
- Nuts
- Olive oil

Foods to avoid:

- Processed foods
- Refined foods

Pros:

- Moderate, flexible approach
- Considers primary food
- May become a sustainable lifestyle approach

Cons:

- Some may require firmer guidelines to feel their best
- Some may not react well to wine and coffee
- Some may not have the willpower to moderate rich foods

Sources:

Get Started with the Mediterranean Diet www.mediterraneandietforall.com <http://www.mediterraneandietforall.com>

Mediterranean Diet www.health.usnews.com <http://www.health.usnews.com>

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