

Mediterranean-Style Eating

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you set specific nutrition goals and guide you in planning a personalized healthy eating pattern.

To find an RDN in your area, visit “Find an Expert” at www.eatright.org



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A Mediterranean-style diet emphasizes plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans, as well as seafood and healthy fats from foods like nuts, seeds, avocados, and olive oil. It also includes moderate amounts of yogurt and cheese and smaller amounts of meats and sweets than many Americans are used to eating.

Based on the traditional cuisine of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, this style of eating is easy and affordable to follow with foods from your local supermarket. And, it’s a plan you can enjoy for a lifetime.

Benefits of Mediterranean Eating

A Mediterranean diet is not a “diet” that limits certain foods. It’s a style of eating that is delicious and has proven health benefits.

This style of eating may help promote a healthy body weight and may reduce the risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. It provides plenty of beneficial antioxidants, dietary fiber, and healthy fats, including omega-3s.

The Mediterranean-style diet described here is one of the healthy eating patterns recommended by the *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Ways to Eat Mediterranean Style

There are many ways you can enjoy healthy, Mediterranean-style eating.

- Enjoy a wide array of colorful fruits and vegetables. Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried versions and 100% juices all count.
- Choose mostly whole-grain cereals, breads, pasta, and rice. Experiment with different grains like whole-wheat couscous, bulgur, and farro.
- Eat fish and seafood at least twice a week. Select seafood that’s rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, sardines, tuna, anchovies, herring, Pacific oysters, and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel. Canned and frozen fish are also options. Look for products that are lower in sodium.
- Dairy is typically Greek or regular yogurt or cheese. To limit added sugar, buy plain yogurt and sweeten it with fruit or a touch of honey. Choose flavorful cheeses such as Greek feta, Italian Parmesan, or Spanish manchego so that a little goes a long way.
- Choose mostly lean protein sources such as beans, seafood, eggs, and poultry, and less red meat, which is eaten only in small amounts or used as a garnish.
- Use healthy oils like olive oil and foods that contain them, such as avocados, olives, nuts, and seeds.
- Serve fruit for dessert and save sweets and rich desserts for special occasions.

