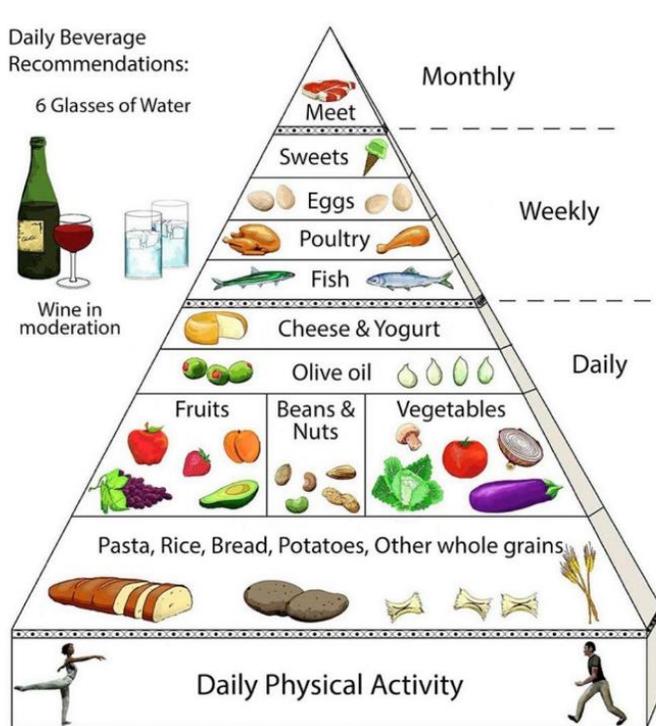


## The Mediterranean Diet and Good Health

Unlike the typical American diet, the traditional Mediterranean diet is high in fiber and low in saturated fat. However, the Mediterranean diet is not necessarily low in total fat. But, the types of fats emphasized in the Mediterranean diet are "healthy" monounsaturated fats, like those found in olive oil, which do not raise cholesterol levels.

There is no one typical Mediterranean diet. Many countries border the Mediterranean Sea and variations in the Mediterranean diet exist between these countries. However, according to the American Heart Association, traditional Mediterranean diets have the following characteristics in common:



### Health Benefits

There has been a lot of research on the potential health benefits of following the Mediterranean diet. According to studies, this diet may offer these benefits:

- Reduce the rate of death in people who have had a heart attack
- Reduce the rate of heart attack and stroke in people who have heart disease
- Aid in weight loss
- Lower the risk of developing cancer
- Lower HbA1c levels (a measurement of how well the body uses blood sugar) in people with diabetes
- Reduce pain in rheumatoid arthritis
- Lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome—The term "metabolic syndrome" refers to a group of risk factors for cardiovascular disease. These risk factors include obesity, low amounts of "good" (HDL) cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood pressure, and prediabetes.

### Helpful Resources

- [www.cardiosmart.org](http://www.cardiosmart.org)
- [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
- [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov)
- <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating>

### Serving Recommendations

Food Group	Servings	Serving Size	Example	Tip
Fish	2-3 times per week	3-4 ounces	Salmon, sardines, herring, tuna and mackerel	Rich in omega 3s
Fruit	3-4 daily	1 medium sized fruit 1 cup fresh cut 1/4 cup dried	Berries, oranges, banana, apples, melon, avocados, kiwi, dates, pineapple, pear	Aim for at least 1 serving of berries daily
Vegetables	4-5 daily	1/2 cup cooked 1 cup raw	Broccoli, asparagus, eggplant, squash, zucchini, Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, spinach, kale, bell peppers, mushrooms, onion	Aim for 1 cruciferous, 2 leafy greens, and 2 other vegetables daily
Whole grains and starchy vegetables	3-6 daily	1/2 cup cooked 1 slice of bread 1 oz dry cereal	Oats, barley, quinoa, brown rice, sweet potato, red skin potato, whole/sprouted grain bread, couscous, whole grain pasta	Aim for equal servings daily of whole grains and starchy vegetables. Be sure that “whole” is your first ingredient for breads and pastas
Beans and legumes	1-3 daily	1/4 cup hummus or bean dip, 1/2 cup cooked, 1 cup fresh peas or sprouted lentils	Any beans, black-eyed peas, green beans, chickpeas, edamame, peas, lentils, miso, tofu	Use in place of meat
Nuts and seeds	At least 3 per week	1/4 cup, 2 Tbsp nut or seed butter	Walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, cashews, macadamia nuts	Choose raw, unsalted and dry roasted

### Additional recommendations:

- Extra virgin olive oil used as a common monounsaturated fat source. At least 1 Tbsp per day (no more than 4 Tbsp per day).
- Low-to-moderate amounts of dairy products (mostly cheese and yogurt) Limit cheese to 3 servings per week. Tip: Choose fat-free or 1% milk, yogurt and cottage cheese. Eat natural, light or part-skim cheese. Avoid whole-milk dairy, cream and cream-based sauces and dressings.
- Low-to-moderate amounts of eggs (zero to four times per week)
- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed per day. Tip: Mix in a smoothie or oatmeal.
- Low-to-moderate amounts of wine (one glasses of red wine per day), normally consumed with meals. If you do not drink alcohol, there is no reason to start.
- Avoid red meat. No more than 2 times per month.
- Avoid saturated fats (fried food, cookies, cakes etc)

## 7-day Meal Plan

Here is an example of a 7-day Mediterranean diet meal plan:

### Day 1

#### Breakfast

- one boiled egg (sliced)
- whole-grain or wheat toast
- sliced tomatoes

For additional calories, add some sliced avocado to the toast.

#### Lunch

- 2 cups of mixed salad greens with cherry tomatoes and olives on top and a dressing of olive oil and vinegar
- whole-grain pita bread
- 2 ounces (oz) of hummus

#### Dinner

- whole-grain pizza with tomato sauce, grilled vegetables, and low-fat cheese as toppings
- For added calories, add some shredded chicken, ham, tuna, or pine nuts to the pizza.

### Day 2

#### Breakfast

- 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt
- half a cup of fruits, such as blueberries, raspberries, or chopped nectarines

For additional calories, add 1–2 oz of almonds or walnuts.

#### Lunch

- whole-grain sandwich or pita with grilled vegetables, such as eggplant, zucchini, bell pepper, and onion

To increase the calorie content, spread hummus or avocado on the bread/pita before adding the fillings.

#### Dinner

- one portion of baked cod or salmon with garlic and black pepper
- roasted sweet potato with a drizzle of olive oil and cinnamon
- roasted asparagus with a drizzle olive oil, garlic and onion powder

### Day 3

#### Breakfast

- 1 cup of whole-grain oats with cinnamon, dates, and honey
- top with low-sugar fruits, such as raspberries
- 1 oz of shredded almonds or powdered peanut butter(optional)

#### Lunch

- cannellini beans with spices, such as laurel, garlic, and cumin
- 1 cup of arugula and spinach with an olive oil and lemon dressing with toppings of tomato, cucumber, and feta cheese

#### Dinner

- one-half of a cup of whole-grain pasta with tomato sauce, olive oil, and grilled vegetables
- 1 tablespoon of Parmesan cheese

### Day 4

#### Breakfast

- two-egg scramble with bell peppers, onions, and tomatoes
- top with 1 oz of queso fresco or one-quarter of an avocado

#### Lunch

- roasted anchovies or tuna in olive oil on whole-grain toast with a sprinkling of lemon juice
- a warm salad comprising 2 cups of steamed kale and tomatoes

#### Dinner

- 2 cups of spinach with a sprinkling of lemon juice and herbs
- one boiled artichoke with olive oil, garlic powder, and salt

Add another artichoke or cooked quinoa for a hearty, filling meal.

### Day 5

#### Breakfast

- 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt with cinnamon and honey on top
- mix in a chopped apple and shredded almonds

## Lunch

- 1 cup of quinoa with bell peppers, sun-dried tomatoes, and olives
- roasted garbanzo beans with oregano and thyme
- top with feta cheese crumbles or avocado (optional)

## Dinner

- 2 cups of steamed kale with tomato, cucumber, olives, lemon juice, and Parmesan cheese
- brown rice
- grilled salmon with a slice of lemon

## Day 6

### Breakfast

- two slices of whole-grain toast with soft cheese, such as ricotta, queso fresco, or goat cheese
- add chopped blueberries or figs for sweetness

### Lunch

- 2 cups of mixed greens with tomato and cucumber
- a small portion of roasted chicken with a sprinkling of olive oil and lemon juice

### Dinner

- oven-roasted vegetables, such as:
  - artichoke
  - carrot
  - zucchini
  - eggplant
  - sweet potato
  - tomato
- toss in olive oil and heavy herbs before roasting
- 1 cup of whole-grain couscous

## Day 7

### Breakfast

- whole-grain oats with cinnamon, dates, and maple syrup
- top with low-sugar fruits, such as raspberries or blackberries

### Lunch

- stewed zucchini, yellow squash, onion, and potato in a tomato and herb sauce with lentils

### Dinner

- 2 cups of greens, such as arugula or spinach, with tomato, olives, and olive oil
- a small portion of white fish
- leftover vegetable stew from lunch

## Snacks

There are many snack options available as part of the Mediterranean diet.

Suitable snacks include:

- a small serving of nuts
- whole fruits, such as oranges, plums, and grapes
- dried fruits, including apricots and figs
- a serving of yogurt
- hummus with celery, carrots, or other vegetables
- avocado on whole-grain toast