



THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

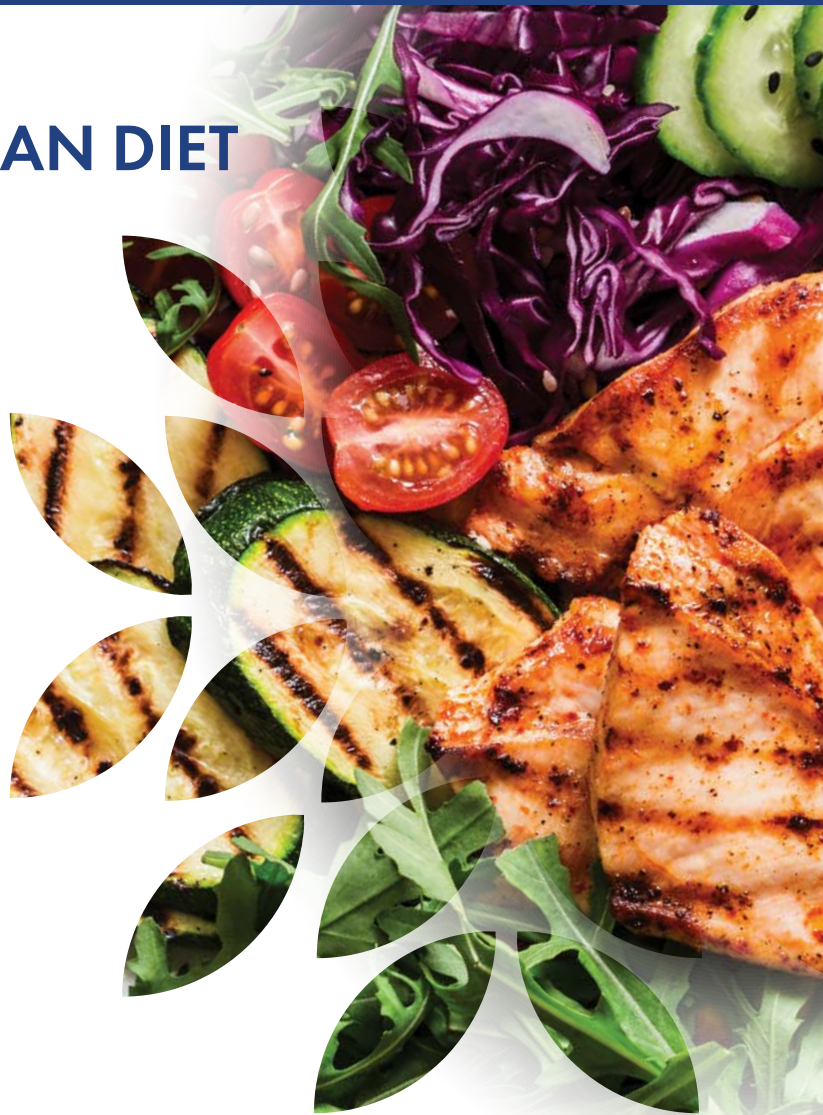
PATIENT HANDOUT

Your practitioner may have recommended you follow a Mediterranean-style diet for its many health benefits. This diet is rich in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory wholefoods and is considered to be the 'gold standard' diet for healthy living.¹

It is in fact, the most studied and well-known dietary pattern in the world and has been shown to reduce the risk of many diseases including cardiovascular disease (CVD).²

The traditional Mediterranean diet focuses on whole foods in their natural form and typically includes:^{2,3}

- High consumption of minimally processed, locally grown, vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, and whole grains.
- Healthy fats from olive oil, nuts and seeds.
- A moderate intake of fish and poultry.
- A low intake of dairy products, red meat, processed meats, and sweets.
- Wine in moderation, consumed with meals.



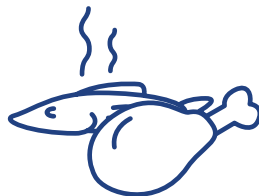
THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET INCLUDES



**LOCALLY GROWN
PRODUCE**



**HEALTHY
VEGETABLE FATS**



**FISH AND
POULTRY**



**LOW INTAKE OF RED
MEATS AND SWEETS**



**WINE IN
MODERATION**

BENEFITS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Numerous studies have shown that following a Mediterranean-style diet offers many favourable effects on health, including increased life expectancy. Other protective effects shown in studies include CVD, stroke, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, several types of cancers, allergic diseases, and most recently, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.^{1,2}



HELPS WITH MANAGING WEIGHT

- Contains high fibre whole grains in combination with lean proteins to help you feel fuller for longer.⁵
- Emphasis on whole foods, reducing the intake of highly processed foods that contain high amounts of sugar and saturated fats.⁶



IMPROVES BLOOD PRESSURE

- Naturally low in sodium to help support cardiovascular health.⁷
- Contains a good balance of healthy fats, including omega-3s to help reduce the risk of CVD through their anti-inflammatory actions.⁸



REDUCES CONSTIPATION

- High fibre foods from plant-based sources contain non-digestible carbohydrates which may assist in promoting digestive health and reducing constipation.⁹



IMPROVED EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

- Omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish, nuts and seeds) are highly concentrated in the brain and may play a role in maintaining or improving mental health.¹⁰
- Fruit and vegetables are packed with essential vitamins and nutrients which can promote emotional wellbeing.¹¹



IMPROVES MEMORY AND BRAIN FUNCTION

- Omega-3 fatty acids have also been found to support memory and brain function and reduce age-related cognitive decline.¹²



ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- This diet is rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory foods to support overall health and wellbeing.
- Beyond the health benefits, reducing meat and increasing legumes can be a cost-effective way of eating.

BEYOND FOOD – LIVING THE MEDITERRANEAN LIFESTYLE

Following a Mediterranean-style diet is not just about what foods you eat but also about how you eat them:

- 1 Try taking time out to prepare meals, with an emphasis on fresh and healthy ingredients.
- 2 Ideally share your meals with friends or family, social connections are important for our mental health and help us eat in a calm and relaxed environment.
- 3 Practice mindful eating, eat meals and snacks without distractions (away from the TV or your desk). This will ensure you are chewing your food properly, help promote better digestion and let you notice when you are full.²⁰
- 4 Eat slowly, chewing is the first step in the digestive process.
- 5 Physical activity - keep your body moving for a healthy body and mind. Try riding or walking to work/bus stop/train station during the week and meeting friends on the weekend for a walk around your local park.

BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET BY FOOD GROUP

FOOD GROUP BENEFITS

Whole foods	An emphasis on whole foods helps reduce the intake of highly processed foods that can promote inflammation and oxidative stress that damages the body's tissues. ²
Omega-3 fatty acids	Help to reduce the risk of CVD, diabetes and age-related cognitive decline through their anti-inflammatory actions. ⁸
Whole grains and legumes	High in fibre, which promotes gut and cardiovascular health. Non-digestible carbohydrates from plant-based foods reduce constipation, support weight loss by making you feel fuller for longer, and reduce the risk of CVD and diabetes. ¹³
Fruits and vegetables	High in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds to support overall health and wellbeing High amounts of inflammation and oxidative stress promote a myriad of chronic disease such as CVD, atherosclerosis, diabetes, and cognitive dysfunction. ^{14,15} Eating a variety of fruit and vegetables every day ensures your diet is rich in antioxidants, protecting the body's tissues from damage. ¹⁶

WHAT FOODS TO INCLUDE AND RECOMMENDED AMOUNTS^{17,18,19}

FOOD GROUP	RECOMMENDED INTAKE*	TIPS	FOODS
Eat every day			
Vegetables	4 or more servings each day (one portion each day should be raw vegetables)	A serving is 1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked vegetables	Choose vegetables based on their seasonal availability while ensuring you eat a variety of colours and textures
Fruits	2-3 servings each day	Make fruit your dessert	Choose fruits based on their seasonal availability: apples; bananas; berries; mango; pears
Grains	4 or more servings each day	1 serving = 30 g cereal, 1 slice bread, 1 small wrap, ½ cup cooked rice or pasta.	Oats, wholegrain bread, pasta and crackers; brown rice; quinoa; buckwheat
Herbs and Spices	Use daily	Season foods with herbs, garlic, onions and spices instead of salt	Garlic; ginger; basil; sage; mint; dill; fennel; cumin; paprika
Fats/oils	Olive oil: 2-4 tablespoons each day	Use extra virgin olive oil in salad dressings and cooking; choose avocado or natural peanut butter instead of butter or margarine	Extra virgin olive oil; Avocado; peanut butter; fish (salmon, trout, sardines and mackerel)
Water	6-8 250 mL glasses per day	Should be your main drink	Try to consume filtered drinking water
Eat a few times per week			
Nuts & seeds (unsalted)	3 or more servings each week	1 serving = 30 g • 23 almonds • 14 walnut halves	Almonds; Brazil nuts; walnuts; cashews; pistachios; pepitas; peanuts; sesame seeds; flaxseeds; hemp seeds; (try nut butters like almond butter and tahini)
Legumes (canned or dry)	3 or more servings each week	1 serving = 1 cup	Chickpeas; lentils; green or yellow split peas; black beans; kidney beans; pinto beans
Fish and seafood	2-3 times each week	Try preparing fish in different ways (lemon and dill, teriyaki sauce, coconut and lime)	Salmon; sardines; tuna; mackerel; cod; trout
Yoghurt/cheese/eggs/poultry	Choose daily to weekly	Choose low-fat yoghurt and cheeses; choose skinless chicken or turkey in place of red meat	Greek yoghurt; fetta; cottage cheese; free range/organic eggs; skinless cuts of chicken or turkey e.g. breast
Alcohol/wine	Men: 1-2 glasses each day Women: 1 glass each day	Discuss with your practitioner what is optimal for you	
Eat occasionally			
Sweet/savoury snacks	30 g chocolate / small packet chips / 2 biscuits	2 serves per week (or less)	Chocolate; chips; biscuits; candy bars
Red meat	80 - 100 g / size of deck of cards	2 serves per week (or less)	Beef; lamb; pork
Processed meat	80 - 100 g / size of deck of cards	1 - 2 serves per week (or less)	Ham; bacon; sausages; deli meats (salami)

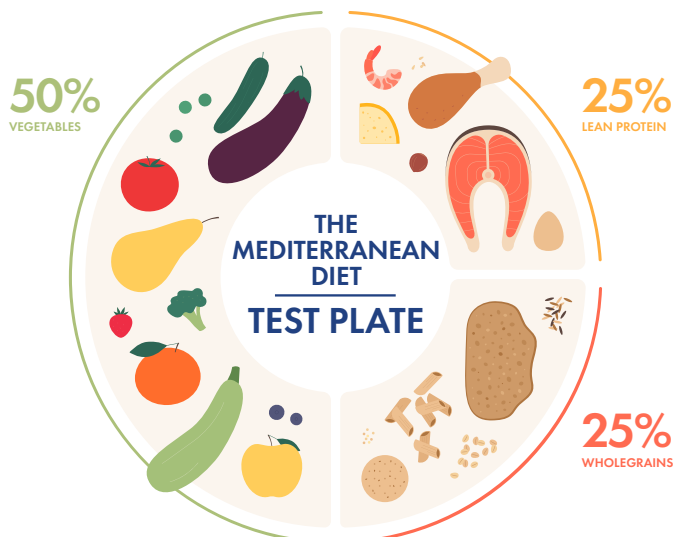


MEAL PLANNING

TIPS FOR TRANSITIONING TO A MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Making diet changes can be overwhelming at first however, don't feel that you need to do everything at once. Taking small steps and transitioning to this new way of eating will set you up for success. Start with meals that you feel are achievable and will work with your lifestyle, as you get used to these new additions, make more positive changes.

- Try one new recipe every day/second day/or on the weekend, or change up a meal to be more Mediterranean focused e.g. if you have toast with jam for breakfast, instead swap jam for avocado or sliced tomato and ricotta cheese.
- Phase foods out of your pantry and swap them for Mediterranean alternatives e.g. white pasta for brown pasta, potato chips for raw nuts and seeds, sugary breakfast cereals for oats/natural muesli.
- Snack on fruit, raw nuts or vegetable sticks and hummus instead of chips/chocolate bars etc.
- Have fresh fruit for dessert.
- Carry a water bottle with you to ensure you're staying hydrated.
- Add a side salad or extra vegetable to meals to help boost your vegetable intake.
- Swap yellow cheeses such as cheddar for feta/ricotta.
- Challenge yourself to try a new food once a week – what is a vegetable, fruit, grain, nut/seed or legume you haven't eaten before? e.g. chickpeas, hemp seeds, quinoa, eggplant or grapefruit – pick a food in the "Foods to Include" table and find a recipe.
- Do the plate test for main meals – is my plate 50% vegetables, 25% grains and 25% lean protein?



MEDITERRANEAN EATING FOR BUSY PEOPLE

- Stock your pantry with healthy essentials, this could include quinoa, brown rice, whole grain pasta, canned beans, dried fruit, and nuts.
- Pre-prepared salad bags are handy when time poor, just swap the included dressing with olive oil and balsamic vinegar, for lunch. You can also add avocado.
- Add a can of mixed beans or chickpeas to salad.
- Sliced apple with nut butter is a quick and easy snack.
- Greek yoghurt with oats and banana for breakfast or as a snack.
- Prepare breakfast the night before (see overnight oats recipe on the back page).
- Canned sardines/tuna/salmon on wholegrain crackers as a snack.
- Batch cook – cook extra at dinner time and bring the left overs for lunch or freeze the extras for days you don't have time to cook.
- When eating out try to choose dishes that contain mostly vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein.
- Keep a recipe book of all of the foods and snacks you love cooking for a quick and easy reference.





MEALS IDEAS FOR HEALTHY EATING



BREAKFAST

- Sourdough toast with sliced avocado, poached egg, drizzled with olive oil and seasoned with cracked pepper.
- Overnight oats with Greek yoghurt, milk or non-dairy alternative, apple, chopped nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans), and raisins.
- Bircher muesli - rolled oats, slithered almonds, pepitas, Greek yoghurt, and raspberries/blueberries.
- Mediterranean omelette with mushrooms, cherry tomatoes, red onion, and feta cheese.
- Breakfast smoothie - milk or non-dairy alternative, banana or mixed berries, handful of spinach, and almond butter.



LUNCH

- Grilled lemon herb chicken salad - cos lettuce leaves, cucumber, Roma tomatoes, red onion, avocado, kalamata olives and lemon.
- Mediterranean chickpea and quinoa bowl with capsicum, red onion, cucumber, feta cheese, slithered almonds, garlic, and spices (cumin and paprika).
- Wholemeal pesto pasta - pesto, sun-dried tomatoes, olives, marinated artichoke hearts, rocket, and feta cheese.
- Wholegrain pita bread with falafel, cucumber, tomato, red onion, mesclun lettuce, and hummus.



DINNER

- Baked fish with brown rice and asparagus (dressed with olive oil, garlic and fresh herbs) served with leafy green salad, lemon juice and olive oil.
- Mediterranean-style homemade vegetable soup with zucchini, carrots, mushrooms, celery, chickpeas, onion, garlic, and spices (thyme, coriander, turmeric, and sweet paprika).
- Seafood pasta with prawns, calamari, and salmon, with a sauce of cream, garlic, parsley, white wine, and fresh lemon juice.
- Chicken and vegetable skewers – chicken capsicum, onion, and tomato, topped with lemon.



SNACKS

- A handful of nuts and/or seeds.
- Fresh fruit with nut butter.
- Fresh vegetable sticks with hummus or tzatziki.
- Natural Greek-style yoghurt with fresh fruit and nuts.
- Avocado on toast or wholegrain crackers (with extra virgin olive oil).
- Boiled egg OR feta/ricotta cheese on a slice of wholemeal bread or crackers.

