



MAY NUTRITION NEWSLETTER

The Mediterranean Diet

What is it and how to apply it to your everyday life



WHAT IS IT?

The Mediterranean diet is a way of eating followed by countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It emphasizes whole, minimally processed foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. This diet puts an emphasis on healthy unsaturated fats such as olive oil, fish and nuts. It also promotes adequate intake of fiber through fruits and vegetables. The diet includes herbs and spices for flavor instead of excess salt. In addition to its food choices, the Mediterranean diet promotes mindful eating and an active lifestyle.



WHY IS IT RECOMMENDED?

The Mediterranean diet is an evidence-based approach to managing or preventing chronic diseases such as high blood pressures, heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

It's main principles include:

- Choosing plant based foods more often (whole grains, fruits/vegetables, nuts/seeds, olives, legumes)
- Drinking plenty of fluids (1.5-2 liters of fluid daily)
- Season foods with herbs and spices rather than salt
- Use olive oil to cook rather than butter
- Eat at least 2 servings of fish weekly
- Choose lean meats (poultry/turkey) more often and red meats less often

Lifestyle changes:

- Include 3 meals per day
- Aim for about 30 minutes of physical activity daily
- Prioritize adequate rest

BARRIERS TO THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Although there is plenty of evidence to support the benefits of the Mediterranean diet, it's not always accessible and practical living in North America.

Common barriers we may experience when trying to follow this way of eating include:

- Limited access to fresh seafood
- Rising cost of frozen seafood, fresh vegetables, nuts, legumes and olive oil
- Cultural barriers and limited knowledge in how to incorporate these foods into your diet



OVERCOMING BARRIERS

- Buy frozen fruits and vegetables for a cost effective approach that lasts much longer
 - Frozen fruits and vegetables have the same nutritional value as fresh
- Use canned legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas) as affordable protein staples
- Purchase store-brand olive oil, whole grains, and nuts in bulk
- Shop seasonal produce and freeze any extra
- Replace expensive seafood for canned options like sardines or tuna in water
 - Pay attention to additives and choose low sodium products when possible

PRACTICAL WAYS TO FOLLOW THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

- Incorporate unsalted nuts and dried fruit as a snack (added fiber and unsaturated fats)
- Add fish into your diet by making canned tuna or salmon salads
- Toss canned chickpeas or kidney beans into your salads
- Have frozen vegetables like broccoli or green beans on hand to add to meals
- Leave a bottle of olive oil on your kitchen counter and add onto vegetables, starches or meat when cooking
- Combine different herbs and spices to create salt-free seasoning blends

For more information on the Mediterranean diet, check out: Dietitians of Canada > Mediterranean Diet (www.dietitians.ca)

Heart Healthy Seasoning Blends

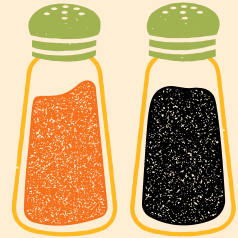
Seasoning blends without all the added salt!

All-Purpose Savory Blend

2 tsp garlic powder
2 tsp onion powder
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp dried parsley
1 tsp dried thyme
½ tsp black pepper

Great on chicken, vegetables and potatoes

Each blend makes about 2-3 tablespoons of seasoning



Mediterranean Blend

2 tsp dried oregano
2 tsp dried basil
1 tsp dried rosemary (crushed)
1 tsp garlic powder
½ tsp black pepper
Optional: pinch of red pepper flakes

Great for roasted veggies, potatoes, or olive oil based poultry marinades

Taco Seasoning Blend

2 tsp chili powder
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp paprika
½ tsp garlic powder
½ tsp onion powder
½ tsp oregano
Optional: pinch cayenne for heat

Smoky BBQ Blend

2 tsp smoked paprika (or regular paprika)
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp onion powder
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp chili powder
½ tsp black pepper
½–1 tsp brown sugar (optional for balance)

Great for grilling or roasting

Lemon Pepper Herb Blend

2 tsp lemon zest
1 tsp black pepper
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp dried dill or parsley
½ tsp onion powder

Great on chicken, pork, fish or potatoes