

EAT YOUR WAY TO GOOD HEALTH WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

The Mediterranean Diet reflects a traditional eating pattern found in the countries of the Mediterranean region of Europe.

This style of eating emphasizes fruits and vegetables, nuts, olive oil and whole grains with small amounts of fish, meat and low-fat dairy products. Research has shown remarkable health benefits linked to the Mediterranean style of eating, including reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and lower total mortality rates!

The PREDIMED study is one of the most highly regarded landmark studies that assessed the effects of the Mediterranean Diet on the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease?



WHAT IS PREDIMED?

PREDIMED is an acronym for the study name: Prevención con dieta mediterránea, which translates to Prevention with Mediterranean Diet. The study began in 2003 and included more than 7,000 individuals at high risk of cardiovascular disease living throughout Spain. The study compared three different diets: the Mediterranean Diet supplemented with mixed nuts including almonds (30g, approximately 1 oz, per day), the Mediterranean Diet supplemented with extra virgin olive oil (50 ml per day) and a low-fat control diet (American Heart Association Guidelines), which participants followed for nearly five years.

WHAT WERE THE STUDY FINDINGS?

The results showed a Mediterranean Diet including nuts, like almonds, reduced the risk of cardiovascular diseases by 30% and reduced the risk of stroke by 49% when compared to the low-fat control diet. The Mediterranean Diet including extra virgin olive oil also reduced the risk of cardiovascular diseases by 30%. Although further research is needed to determine if the study findings can be generalized to the U.S. population and those at lower cardiac risk, the results provide strong support for the diet's heart-health benefits.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

These results further support the body of evidence that an eating pattern focused on fruits and vegetables, nuts, olive oil and whole grains can set you on the right track for better health and well-being.

SIX EASY STEPS TO GO MEDITERRANEAN

While the Mediterranean Diet is inspired by foods found near the Mediterranean Sea, you don't have to travel any farther than your kitchen to discover its delicious flavors and enjoy the health benefits. It's easy to adopt a Mediterranean style of eating by making some simple changes to your diet.

START WITH THESE STEPS

1. Focus on good fats. Replace saturated fats with olive oil and other mono- and polyunsaturated fats. Try avocado as a sandwich spread instead of mayonnaise, and snack on a handful of almonds instead of chips or pretzels.
2. Increase plant-based foods, including a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends one to two cups of fruit and two to three cups of vegetables each day.³
3. Get your protein the Mediterranean way and opt for nuts, beans, eggs, poultry and fatty fish like salmon or tuna.
4. Leave the salt shaker off the table and season your foods with herbs and spices like garlic, oregano and cinnamon.
5. Enjoy moderate amounts of dairy products: plain yogurt, feta cheese, parmesan cheese and 1% milk.
6. Being active and social are also important parts of the Mediterranean diet. Get some physical activity every day and enjoy meals with family and friends.



MAKE YOUR PLATE MEDITERRANEAN

The USDA's MyPlate is a simple tool you can use to help build a healthier plate at meal times. Did you know you can use it as a guide to building more Mediterranean-focused meals, too? Below are some delicious examples of Mediterranean-inspired recipes using almonds.

Visit Almonds.com for these recipes and many more.

MEDITERRANEAN ASPARAGUS SALAD

Served as an entrée or as a side dish, this salad offers something beyond the ordinary.

QUINOA SALAD WITH ALMONDS + FETA

This salad provides a shot of color and sunny Mediterranean flavor any time of year.

MAPLE BAKED SALMON WITH CHOPPED ALMONDS

Crunchy almonds provide a delicious source of fiber and magnesium, while the salmon lends a dose of omega-3 fats. The delicate flavors of salmon marinated with sweet maple dressing make this dish an instant favorite.

1. Salas-Salvadó J, Fernández-Ballart J, Ros E, et al. Effect of a Mediterranean diet supplemented with nuts on metabolic syndrome status. *Arch Intern Med.* 2008;168:2449-2458.

2. Estruch R, Ros E, Salas-Salvadó J, et al. Primary prevention of cardiovascular disease with a Mediterranean diet. *N Engl J Med.* 2013; 368:1279-1290.

3. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>.

Good news about almonds and heart health. Scientific evidence suggests, but does not prove, that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, such as almonds, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease. One serving of almonds (28g) has 13g of unsaturated fat and only 1g of saturated fat.

Go to Almonds.com for the printable file. Document #2015HP0016 © 2017 Almond Board of California. All rights reserved.