

Why Mediterranean diet is an better alternative to for your health?

Mediterranean diet is a frequent food eaten by people living around the Mediterranean sea belt, which include countries like Spain, Greece, Morocco, Northern Africa, West Asia, Turkey, etc.

If you speak to an Italian, his concept of Mediterranean food would be different; a Turkish would talk of hummus, and pita bread or a Greek would discuss the benefits of olive oil and baba ghanoush. There is no one particular regional food one could associate along. The consensus among many a researcher is the healthy lifestyle and fresh produce, which has a lot of potassium, iron, etc. For centuries, the people living here have enjoyed a lower risk of cancers, reduced risk of developing heart disease, and increased longevity overall.

What is Mediterranean food

The Mediterranean food ideally involves fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meat like fish, chicken, legumes, grains, nuts, and seeds. The region is rich in nutrients that the cuisine changes its shape as you traverse down the coast from Gibraltar to Morocco. Now the term 'diet' is no a diet in usual weight loss sense but eating habits and the way one prepares it.

The typical Mediterranean food does not involve a lot of deep-fried items, but olive oil used for dressing and shallow fry — low consumption of meat and meat products; and dairy products. The consumption of alcohol was limited to red wine only during meal times. This consumption of wine, which researchers say, in limited amounts, is perfect for heart.

Health Benefits

Let's look at the significant health benefits if one makes a healthy change.

- a) Mediterranean diet has a lot of roughage. Since the foods are not processed, thereby retaining most of its nutrients. The menu is high in fibre leading to a sound digestive system and reduces the chances of **bowel cancer** from occurring. Many a women can reduce their chances of **breast cancer** by strict adherence to this diet pattern as per many a research.
- b) One of the most healthy outcomes from various researches from days of Ancel Keys (who initially propounded this diet in the late 1970's) is the effect on the **heart**. Adequate intake of Olive oil, fat from fish, reduces the occurrence of cardiovascular diseases such as **thrombosis**, coronary heart disease etc.
- c) The key components of Mediterranean diets are also beneficial for **weight loss** in obese people and also reduces the chances of obesity due to almost complete restraint from red meat, heavy alcohol, and use of processed foods.
- d) The diet reduces the risk of muscle movements as you age. The signs of frailty and general weakness is lower among people of the Mediterranean region from various studies.
- e) The antioxidant properties, small LDL based foods can effectively reduce the chances of one having an Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's diseases, respectively.

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e) A 2013 study found that people who followed a Mediterranean diet most closely had a 98.6 per cent lower risk of developing depression.

f) There are at least 15 types of cancers that are protected. These include breast cancer, colorectal cancer, gastric cancer, prostate cancer, liver cancer, and head and neck cancer etc...

Below is the ideal servings per person per day. This is an indicative list and not exhaustive. You will find many on the internet.

Recommended servings

a) Red wine Consumption - 1 serving for women. 1-2 serving for men during the day. The wine consumption only meant during meals and not otherwise.

b) Fish - 3 servings per week is good enough.

c) Olive oil – 2 to 4 Tbsp per day replacing butter, margarine, etc

d) Cheese - Natural cheese would be the best and a maximum of 3 servings per week

e) Vegetables - More than 3 plus servings per day

f) Fruit - 3 servings per day

g) Legumes and Beans - 3 servings per week.

h) Whole grains - 1/2 cup per food.

The generic idea with the above table is that anything fresh should have more servings and those with long shelf life should be consumed sparingly.

Note: In the US, depending on the region you may live, availability of all Mediterranean varieties of food could be a challenge. If you are trying to change your diet, have a variety of locally available fresh and seasonal food.

Here is a sample meal plan for one day. Replace for other days with your choice of vegetables and fruits. Look at the above servings to get an idea of your intake.

Breakfast - Oatmeal with fruits and nuts

Lunch - Fish (any variety) with feta cheese and almonds

Dinner - Any salad with chicken roasted in oven and red wine.

Exercise

Having said great about the Mediterranean diet, it's vital to practice what the people of the region do. They are active. They walk a lot and have a lot of physical activity.

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Depending on your age, there are many activities you may include as part of your exercise. The activities may include farming, gardening, physical cleaning without machines, gym, yoga thus allowing the body to absorb fat, reduce the chances of diabetes. One should look at walking in the park, cycling, do physical chores at home.

As we move towards healthier options of food consumption, we should also avoid many sugary drinks that are cola based, soda based and bottled juices. Make your own fresh juices that has pulp and fibre. It's our health that's more vital and need to have a balanced approach. An occasional indulgence is not condemned, but heavy reliance on fast food is certainly a bad choice.

If you are interested to learn more about healthy living the natural way, book your appointment with Todd Robinson today.

References

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