



# ELITE HEALTH CHALLENGE

## FOOD PLAN

We are excited for you to begin the Elite Health Challenge! The purpose of this Food Plan is to give you tasty, healthy food options for the next 21 days. The Plan, supported by great ideas in our Pinterest Board, serves as a great baseline to start from.

You will discover that you can make so many dishes work! Just stick as close as possible to the guidelines provided in Synergy's Elite Health Challenge Guide! One tip to make life easier during this Challenge is to prepare more than one serving at a time when you cook and then save the extra servings for another meal. Easy!

Here you will find some foods you can start with and we encourage you to explore other ideas too. Get creative and have fun!

### MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE

Whole, single-ingredient foods are the key to good health. The Mediterranean lifestyle also involves regular physical activity, sharing meals with other people and enjoying life. Although you will find your favorite go-to's, be creative with your food choices and embrace new things.

### FOODS YOU SHOULD EAT

Base your diet on healthy, unprocessed Mediterranean foods such as:

**RED, ORANGE AND YELLOW VEGETABLES:** Red and yellow bell peppers, radishes and carrots will add nutrients, such as vitamin C and potassium, and flavor to a leafy green salad. They are also tasty on their own. Red, orange and yellow bell peppers pair well with tomato-based pasta sauces, such as marinara or bolognese, too. Tomatoes, whether they're eaten plain, in salads or cooked in

saucers, have a starring role in the Mediterranean diet, as well. Squash (spaghetti, pumpkin, yellow) and beets are additional options to include in your daily eating plan.

**GREEN VEGETABLES AND LEAFY GREENS:** Green vegetables are good sources of fiber and vitamin A, among other things. Broccoli, green beans and peas are healthy additions to the Mediterranean diet, but there are other options you may also include. Fill a bowl with leafy greens, such as spinach, romaine lettuce, kale or mustard greens, and drizzle the greens with olive oil and a squirt of lemon juice for a tasty side salad. Stir chopped okra into vegetable soup or serve sliced cucumbers alongside a snack. Avocado, artichoke, asparagus, green peppers, bean sprouts, bok choy, Brussels sprouts, zucchini and celery are other vegetables to consider.

**WHITE AND PURPLE VEGETABLES:** Eggplant, which is one of the few purple vegetables, is a good addition to the Mediterranean diet. Cut the vegetable into thin slices and use them in place of noodles when you make lasagna or grill the eggplant slices and top them with fresh tomatoes and a drizzle of olive oil. Among the white vegetables, cauliflower is a stand-out. It's rich in fiber and makes a simple side dish. Steam or roast cauliflower and puree it with olive oil and fresh rosemary. Onion, jicama, mushrooms, water chestnuts, bamboo shoots, and leeks are several more white vegetables you can include in your eating plan.

**TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS:** The trick to eating vegetables on the Mediterranean diet is to eat them steamed, roasted, grilled or raw. Because the Mediterranean diet is not heavy on saturated fats, avoid breaded and fried vegetables. In addition to healthy vegetables, you may also eat lean meat, low-fat dairy foods, and some fresh fruit.

**FRUITS:** Berries are a great choice for fruits to be eaten on a Mediterranean diet because they are lower on the glycemic index. You may also eat moderate amounts of apples, bananas, oranges, pears, raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, grapes, dates, figs, melons, peaches, etc.

**NUTS AND SEEDS:** Nuts and seeds serve as additional sources of protein and healthy fats. Similar to olive oil, nuts and seeds contain unsaturated fatty acids as well as beneficial omega-3 fatty acids. This food category also includes almonds, walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts, cashews, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, etc. Opt for unsalted and non-candied varieties. Despite the healthy fats, nuts and seeds are still high in calories, so stick with just an ounce or two per day.

**LEGUMES:** Beans, peas, lentils, peanuts, chickpeas, etc.

**FISH AND SEAFOOD:** White fish, salmon, sardines, trout, tuna, mackerel, shrimp, oysters, clams, crab, mussels, etc.

**POULTRY:** Chicken, duck, turkey, etc.

**EGGS:** All types of eggs are encouraged in moderation as a protein source and can be cooked any number of ways (such as fried, scrambled, poached, and hard-boiled). Chicken, quail and duck eggs are good choices.

**DAIRY:** Low-fat and fat-free dairy can be consumed, such as low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese. Opt for these lower-fat options over full-fat cheeses, yogurts, greek yogurts, etc. (NOTE: opt for plain yogurts to keep the sugar down.)

**HERBS AND SPICES:** Garlic, basil, mint, rosemary, sage, nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper, etc.

**HEALTHY FATS:** Healthy fats are a major component of the Mediterranean diet, keeping you full and fueled longer! Extra virgin olive oil is the healthy fats super star, but other healthy fats include olives, avocados, avocado oil, coconut oil, and more.

## WHEN TO EAT certain FOODS

**EAT OFTEN:** Vegetables, leafy greens, fruits, raw nuts, seeds, legumes, herbs, spices, fish, seafood and healthy oils (extra virgin olive oil, avocado oil).

**EAT IN MODERATION:** Poultry, eggs and plain yogurt.

**EAT RARELY:** Red meat (steak, ground beef, bacon etc) should be consumed very rarely on the Mediterranean diet, along with high-carb vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, and yams.

## FOODS TO AVOID

**ADDED SUGAR:** Sugar-sweetened beverages, added sugars, soda, carbonation, processed meat, refined grains, refined oils and other highly processed foods. You should also avoid candies, ice cream, table sugar and many others.

**REFINED GRAINS:** White bread, pasta made with refined wheat, etc.

**TRANS FATS:** Found in margarine and various processed foods.

**REFINED OILS:** Soybean oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil and others.

**PROCESSED MEATS:** Processed sausages, hot dogs, cold cuts with nitrates or nitrites, etc.

**HIGHLY PROCESSED FOODS:** Anything labeled "low-fat" or "diet" or which looks like it was made in a factory.

**HIGH GLYCEMIC FOODS:** The glycemic index is a number from 0 to 100 assigned to a food, with pure glucose arbitrarily given the value of 100, which represents the relative rise in the blood glucose level two hours after consuming that food. When selecting any food to eat, during your Elite Health Challenge, it is always good to consume lower glycemic index foods.