**Eating Mediterranean diet could prevent 19,000 UK deaths, Cambridge University scientists claim**

* [**JAMIE MICKLETHWAITE**](http://www.standard.co.uk/author/jamie-micklethwaite)
* Thursday 29 September 2016
* [4 comments](http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/a-mediterranean-diet-could-reduce-the-risk-of-heart-cambridge-university-scientists-claim-a3356801.html#commentsDiv)

**Eating a Mediterranean diet could slash the number of deaths in the UK by 19,000, scientists from Cambridge University claim.**

In the first UK study on the health effects of a Mediterranean diet, researchers gathered data from nearly 24,000 healthy Britons whose diets had been monitored from 12 to 17 years.

They found that people who adopted a Mediterranean diet were 16 per cent less likely to suffer damage to their hearts or arteries than those who did not.

The findings indicate that 12.5 per cent of cardiovascular deaths in the UK - around 19,000 - could be avoided if more Britons switched to a Mediterranean diet.

Traditionally people from Mediterranean countries consume large amounts of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and olive oil, little red meat, and only moderate quantities of dairy products, fish, poultry and wine.

Lead researcher Dr Nita Forouhi, from Cambridge University’s Medical Research Council Epidemiology Unit said: “The benefits of the Mediterranean diet for cardiovascular health are well documented in countries of the Mediterranean region, but this is the first study to evaluate this in the UK.

"If our findings are broadly representative of the overall UK population, then we can assume that higher level of adherence to the Mediterranean diet could have significant impact in lowering the cardiovascular disease burden in the UK."

Dr Forouhi added: "Encouraging greater adoption of the Mediterranean diet looks like a promising component of a wider strategy to help prevent cardiovascular disease, including other important factors such as not smoking and maintaining a healthy weight, blood cholesterol and blood pressure."

Results from the study appear in the latest issue of the journal BMC Medicine.