**The chemical secrets of the Mediterranean diet: High levels of magnesium help to reduce risk of strokes, diabetes and heart disease**

* **Scientists have found magnesium reduces the risk of diseases such as diabetes**
* **This can be found in stalwarts of the Med diet such as leafy greens, nuts, fish**
* **The key is not eating just one of the above but a wide range of foods containing the mineral, the Chinese researchers say**

By [Daily Mail Reporter](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Daily+Mail+Reporter)

**PUBLISHED:** 23:50, 7 December 2016 | **UPDATED:** 14:45, 8 December 2016

A Mediterranean diet is famously good for you because it is high in fruit and vegetables, while keeping red meat and dairy to a minimum.

But scientists have found another reason why it is so beneficial – it is rich in magnesium.

This is found in leafy greens, nuts, whole grains, meats and fish, which help reduce the risk of preventable diseases. Spices, beans and cocoa are also rich sources of magnesium.

The key is not eating just one of the above but a wide range of foods containing the mineral, the researchers say.

A magnesium-rich diet produced a 10 per cent lower risk of coronary heart disease, 12 per cent lower risk of stroke and a 26 per cent lower risk of type 2 diabetes.

The NHS recommends 300mg of magnesium a day for men and 270mg a day for women.

Yet 11 per cent of women and 16 per cent of men are magnesium deficient, while nearly half of teenagers do not have enough.

Dr Fudi Wang, lead author of the study at Zhejiang University in China, said: 'Low levels of magnesium in the body have been associated with a range of diseases but no conclusive evidence has been put forward on the link between dietary magnesium and health risks.

'Our meta-analysis provides the most up-to-date evidence supporting a link between the role of magnesium in food and reducing the risk of disease.'

Data show that even in developed countries such as the United States, many adults fail to meet the recommended daily intake of magnesium, Dr Wang explains.

That is despite the fact that studies have already demonstrated low levels of serum magnesium can increase the risk of a wide range of diseases, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and cardiovascular disease.

It is therefore crucial to raise awareness about magnesium's precise affect on the human body, he says.

'Importantly, although these foods contain relatively high levels of magnesium, the daily requirement for magnesium is difficult to achieve through a single serving of any one food item,' Dr Wang added.

'Therefore, consuming a wide variety of magnesium-rich foods will help ensure adequate daily intake of magnesium.

'Here, we focused our analysis on the association between dietary magnesium intake and the incidence of highly prevalent chronic diseases and all-cause mortality.'

The research, involving data from 40 studies covering 1999 to 2016, was published in BMC Medicine.

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