Scientists REVEAL magnesium is the secret magic ingredient to healthy Mediterranean Diet

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THE secret ingredient which makes the Mediterranean Diet so healthy is magnesium, according to the latest research.

Scientists say the mineral is more important than previously thought in slashing the risk of heart disease, strokes and diabetes.

And they are convinced the results of their work explain why foods such as nuts, whole grains, leafy greens and oily fish help people live longer.

The team conducted the largest ever analysis of dietary magnesium data, covering more than a million people in nine countries.

They found that eating a diet rich in magnesium cut the risk of coronary heart disease or stroke by 12 per cent.

The danger of developing Type 2 diabetes was reduced by 26 per cent, according to the research at Zhejiang University’s School of Public Health in eastern China.

Dr Fudi Wang, who led the project, 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 analysis provides the most up-to-date evidence supporting a link between the role of magnesium in food and reducing the risk of disease.”

His team, based at one of China’s top universities, analysed data from 40 studies covering a seven-year period.

Their findings, published in the journal BMC Medicine, suggest people in “developed” countries in the West do not take in enough magnesium.

Dr Wang believes public health departments should encourage people to consume more – and to get it from several sources because individual food items do not contain enough.

He said: “Green leafy vegetables such as spinach provide magnesium while spices, nuts, beans, cocoa and whole grains are also rich sources.

“Importantly, the daily requirement is difficult to achieve through a single serving of any one food item.”

In Britain, [NHS](http://www.express.co.uk/latest/nhs) guidelines recommend 300mg of magnesium a day for men and 270mg for women.

The UK’s National Diet and Nutrition Survey found 11 per cent of women and 16 per cent of men are magnesium deficient and nearly half of teenagers do not get enough.

The real Flintstone caveman diet has been revealed after excavations at a prehistoric eating area yielded the remains of 9,000 nuts and seeds from 55 different types of plants at the Hula Valley in northern Israel.