



## Mediterranean diet – a heart-healthy diet that tastes good!

The Mediterranean diet is a plant-orientated and varied mixed diet that can promote our health.

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Explainer videos

The media contribution was created by Anna Umnig as part of her degree in Lebensmittel- und Gesundheitswissenschaften (Food and Health Sciences) (M.Sc.) at the University of Bayreuth for the Ernährungsradar project and is published online in the E-Tutor section. The video consists of her own film and image material. The video was animated using Microsoft PowerPoint 365 and images were either used from Microsoft PowerPoint 365 or purchased from shutterstock.com. Subtitles for the video are available in German and English and can be switched on and off via the YouTube settings.

## English translation of the German explainer video transcript

I don't know about you, but when you hear the term "Mediterranean diet" for the first time, many people first think of holidays in Italy. This typically includes lots of pizza and pasta, but that's not really healthy, is it? So what is a Mediterranean diet mean? Can it positively impact your health? You will learn about all of this in our video, so stay tuned.

### What exactly is a healthy Mediterranean diet? And which foods are typically included?

Back in the 1960s it was observed in a long term study that inhabitants in the Mediterranean region had a lower mortality rate compared to those of other countries. The lowest mortality rate due to coronary heart disease was found among the inhabitants of Crete. For that reason, their diet was examined more closely: At that time, high amounts of olive oil were used. Vegetables and fruit as well as cereal products were also on their plates almost every day. Not to forget the regular consumption of legumes. Nuts and seeds were also consumed frequently. In addition, a lot of herbs and garlic were used as seasoning. Thus less salt is needed.

The traditional Mediterranean diet is very varied and almost no foods are excluded. As you can see in the food pyramid, the Mediterranean diet is mainly made up of plant-based foods such as grains, vegetables and fruit. This is why it is also called a plant-based balanced diet. The German Nutrition Society also recommends such a plant-based balanced diet. Accordingly, the Mediterranean diet can be understood as a variant of the general recommendations for a healthy diet. Besides plant-based foods, animal products tend to be consumed in smaller quantities. Fish, however, is regularly on the plate. It contains omega-3 fatty acids that are important for us. Overall, the

Mediterranean cuisine emphasises foods that are preferably natural and unprocessed. Sugary drinks and sweets are rare.

### **Which effects does the Mediterranean diet have on our health?**

There are now numerous conclusive studies showing that a Mediterranean diet can have a positive effect on the cardiovascular system. Thus, diseases such as strokes or heart attacks can be prevented. There are now also indications that in the long term the Mediterranean Diet can reduce the risk of cancer, including liver and colorectal cancer. However, more research is needed on this in the future. Thereby it is always emphasized that the Mediterranean diet as a whole lays a decisive role.

### **How can individual Mediterranean foods affect our health?**

First of all, the high consumption of vegetables and fruit is a positive aspect of the Mediterranean diet. Besides their high content of vitamins and minerals, they also contain so-called phytochemicals. Some of these substances may have an anti-inflammatory effect. Furthermore, they can possibly help prevent cancer. That is why vegetables and fruit are recommended as is "5 times a day". Combined with a variety of whole grain cereals, they also provide us with plenty of fibre. Even though nowadays the white bread is usually served in Mediterranean cuisine, it is still recommended to prefer the whole grain variety because of its high fibre content.

### **How much olive oil is actually healthy?**

Olive oil is often used in the Mediterranean cuisine, not only for cooking, but also for frying or in cold dishes. Especially the "extra virgin olive oil" belongs to the high-quality fats. They have a favourable composition of fatty acids and are also rich in anti-inflammatory phytochemicals. It also needs to be mentioned that fats and oils generally provide many calories. Nevertheless, olive oil can and should be used for cooking. According to the Mediterranean example, 4 tablespoons a day can be considered as a guideline. This differs from the guideline of the German Nutrition Society. They only recommend 1-2 tablespoons of oil per day.

### **What about a glass of red wine in the evening?**

A glass of red wine is another typical part of "dolce vita" or the Mediterranean lifestyle. It contains health-promoting phytochemicals, however alcohol increases the risk of cancer. Furthermore, alcohol is known to be addictive. The German Nutrition Society therefore tolerates a maximum of 10 grams per day for women and 20 grams per day for men, which corresponds to 1/8 litre and 1/4 litre of wine respectively.

### **How can I implement the Mediterranean diet in everyday life and thereby do something good for my health?**

As mentioned before, a rich salami pizza with extra cheese unfortunately has little to do with the Mediterranean diet in the proper sense. But are there tasty Mediterranean alternatives? Let's take another look at the Mediterranean food pyramid. Let's start with the pizza base: according to the pyramid, grain in the form of flour is a component of every meal. If the pizza dough is made from whole grain flour, the recommendations would be fulfilled optimally. And now for the topping: plenty of vegetables is the motto here. So how about some grilled vegetables on top of the classic tomato sauce? And of course, there's still room for some mozzarella! If you need more inspiration for delicious Mediterranean dishes, just click on the link in our sources.

### **Summary**

So, let's summarise: The Mediterranean diet is a plant-based balanced diet with plenty of vegetables, fruit, cereals and legumes. It is suitable as a long-term diet because of its health-promoting properties. So: Bring "dolce vita" to your home and cook your way through the Mediterranean cuisine. We are sure you will be enthused about how delicious healthy food can be!

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**Link for recipes:**

<https://herzstiftung.de/ihre-herzgesundheit/gesund-bleiben/ernaehrung/mediterrane-rezepte>