

Wellness Wednesday

May 2022

The Wellness focus for the month of May is Healthy eating specifically focusing on the Mediterranean diet. In 2019, 2020 and 2021, the Mediterranean diet was ranked as the best diet to try by U.S. News & World Report. Researchers have found that people on a Mediterranean diet were far less likely to have a heart attack, stroke, or other cardiovascular event than people who ate a low-fat diet. The [foods in a typical Mediterranean diet](#)—fish, nuts, plant oils, fruits and vegetables—help lower inflammation in your body, improve blood vessel function and reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome and diabetes as well as cancer and cognitive decline.

Healthy habits included in the diet are things such as limiting red meat, sweets and **processed** foods. Plus, the diet emphasizes the importance of cooking at home, enjoying meals with others and fitting in regular exercise, like walking. I lived in Padova Italy from 2002 to 2005. I remember people going out into the town squares and walking around after they finished eating dinner every evening with their families for fun and some exercise.



Amalfi Coast Italy/ Costa Amalfitana

Mediterranean diet recipes have short ingredients lists and simple steps. Here are some [Mediterranean diet recipes](#) to try for your next family get together.



Piazza delle Erbe in Padova Italy

Here is your Wellness Wednesday follow up. I discovered a lot of great information on how to get started with your Mediterranean diet and lots of recipe ideas at [The Mediterranean Dish.com](http://TheMediterraneanDish.com) so check it out.

7 ways for how to follow the Mediterranean diet (Recipes Included):

1. **Eliminate fast and processed foods.** For many of us living in America, this is one of the tougher adjustments and may take some time. To start with, try swapping a fast-food meal with a homemade one. For example, if it's chicken wings you crave, make them Greek-style like in [this recipe](#)! Or if it's sweet potato fries (my personal guilty pleasure), try baking them in olive oil with a sprinkle of Mediterranean spices like in [this recipe](#). And so on! **The point is, find a healthier homemade alternative to your favorite fast foods.**
2. **Eat more vegetables, fruits, grains, and legumes.** The base of the Mediterranean diet pyramid should make up the base of every meal. When you can, opt for vegetarian entrees like this [Cauliflower and Chickpea Stew](#) or [Spicy Spinach and Lentil Soup](#). Rely more on satisfying, flavor-packed salads to make up a good portion of your plate. Some ideas: [Kidney Bean Salad](#); [Mediterranean Chickpea Salad](#); [Greek Salad](#); [Balela Salad](#).
3. **Swap fats.** Rely on healthy fats. A good place to start is to swap your butter with good [olive oil](#) in your cooking.
4. **Reduce your intake of fatty red meats...a lot.** Eat more lean proteins--fish about two times a week; and poultry in moderation. A few favorites are this [Easy Baked Salmon](#); [Shrimp Skewers](#); [One-Pan Halibut and Vegetables](#); [Mediterranean Grilled Chicken](#); and [Egg Shakshuka](#)! You can certainly still eat red meat on occasion (very limited), but choose leaner cuts. Lamb is often the red meat of choice in Greece and other Mediterranean countries. You might like to try: [Kofta Kebobs](#); [Grilled Lamb Chops with Mint Quinoa](#); or [Moussaka](#) (Greek eggplant and lamb casserole). For special occasions, I highly recommend [Leg of Lamb with Potatoes](#).
5. **Eat some dairy and eggs.** Consumption of dairy products (in moderation) provides health benefits including lower risk of diabetes, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and obesity. Sadly, according to USDA, more than 80 percent of the entire U.S. population does not meet the daily dairy intake recommendation! We are not talking about topping everything with loads of processed cheese. But perhaps for a snack, swap your chips for a low-fat Greek yogurt. Add a sprinkle of feta cheese to your salad, or swap mayonnaise or your sandwich spread for low-fat [Tzatziki sauce](#).
6. **Do not drink your calories.** In the Mediterranean diet, this translates to drinking more water and swapping calorie-laden Margaritas for an occasional glass of red wine.
7. **Share as many meals with others as possible.** This helps in several ways. Spending time with loved ones reduces stress and elevates our moods. But being deliberate and slowing down to socialize with others also allows us to control our portions.

