

What exactly is the Mediterranean Diet?

Mediterranean countries having similar climatic condition, geological morphology and contacts, have developed similar eating habits and traditions, with some basic common characteristics, but also many variations in each country or even in regions of the same country, as is the case with Greece.

The term Mediterranean Diet, which appeared since 1960, thanks to the American doctor Ancel Keys, describes the common characteristics of the different eating habits and traditions of the Mediterranean countries, which are:

- ***the extensive consumption of olive oil***
- ***the abundant consumption of vegetables, fruits, legumes and unprocessed carbohydrates***
- ***the moderate consumption of dairy, fish and wine***
- ***the limited consumption of red meat and saturated fats.***

Why Mediterranean diet is important? How is it different from other diets?

The mediterranean diet is the ideal nutritional model including a wide variety of foods, with beneficial effects, not only on human health, but also on the environment as a whole . A large number of scientific studies prove that those who follow it are healthier than others who do not. The former show a reduction in the occurrence of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity, certain forms of cancer, but also Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, thus presenting reduced morbidity and mortality.

In addition, the Mediterranean diet, which traditionally includes a low consumption of animal products, is a diet that maximizes longevity, improves health-related quality of life, and at the same time is an ecologically sustainable and environmentally friendly way of eating.

In contrast, other diets adopted for weight loss, it has been shown that they ***increase the risk of nutrient deficiencies, cardiovascular diseases*** (Zoni, Atkins, Dukan diet), while others (Dukan) have caused ***damage to the kidneys of healthy people***, after long-term adoption.

Who follows the Mediterranean Diet today?

The common dietary traditions of the Mediterranean countries, have gradually declined significantly, mainly since the middle of the 20th century as economies developed and people's lifestyles changed.

They were gradually replaced by industrially processed foods, increased consumption of red meat and animal fats, reduction of fruits-vegetables-legumes. As a result, people's degraded health, with an ***increase in obesity, cardiovascular diseases, cancers of nutritional etiology and, in general, increased morbidity and mortality, even in younger persons.***

However, in recent years, ***there has been a change in eating habits of youngsters towards healthier ones, accompanied by environmental sensitivity and concern for animal welfare***

And we always remember that the Mediterranean Diet:

- includes consumption of olive oil, an important ingredient, containing beneficial fats like monosaturated
- is based on fresh products mainly of plant origin, simple preparation of meals, use of herbs and it is tasty
- it doesn't contain industrially processed foods, saturated fats, and doesn't allow high intake of meat products-alcohol-sweets
- is a rich source of dietary fibres, both soluble and non soluble that help develop beneficial intestinal flora, making you eating less while feel fuller longer
- is a rich source of antioxidants that strengthen the immune system and help avoid food supplements that in some cases can cause cancer
- has the best scientific evidence for being healthy, together with economic and socio-cultural benefits
- protects against diabetes type II
- protects against Alzheimer's disease
- improve fertility
- ease depression

Finally, healthy eating shouldn't just be a compulsory" list of "do's" and "don'ts"...

It depends on us, and it can be a pleasant, social and tasty experience!