

# WALNUTS & THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET



## **What is the Mediterranean diet?**

The Mediterranean diet is a term used to describe the traditional eating pattern of people living in Mediterranean countries like Greece, Spain and Italy. The Mediterranean diet consists of more seafood, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes and wine, and fewer highly processed foods, compared to the typical Western or American diet.

## **What are the benefits of eating a Mediterranean diet?**

Many studies have evaluated the potential health benefits of the Mediterranean diet. Most of these studies have shown an association between eating a Mediterranean-style diet and reduced risk of heart disease. In July 2006 a paper<sup>1</sup> was published about a clinical trial that compared the Mediterranean diet to the American Heart Association's low-fat diet. The results showed that people who follow a Mediterranean-style diet supplemented with extra virgin olive oil or nuts had a significantly lower risk of heart disease compared to people eating a low-fat diet. The results also showed that despite the higher fat content of the diet people did not gain weight.

## **Are you eating a Mediterranean diet?**

The researchers who conducted the clinical trial used the following 14 questions to determine how well study participants were following a Mediterranean diet. You can use this to assess your own diet and identify ways to transform your diet into a more healthful, Mediterranean-style diet.

1) Estruch et al. "Effects of a Mediterranean-Style Diet on Cardiovascular Risk Factors" *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 145:1.

# The Mediterranean Diet Quiz

Foods & Frequency of Consumption	Criteria for 1 Point	Your Score
How many ounces of nuts (especially walnuts) do you consume per week?	If you eat more than 5 ounces per week, give yourself 1 point.	
Do you use olive oil as you main culinary fat?	If you can answer YES, give yourself 1 point.	
How much olive oil do you consume in a given day (including olive oil used for frying, on salads, in out-of-house meals, etc.)?	If you consume more than 4 tablespoons per day, give yourself 1 point.	
How many cups of vegetables do you consume per day?	If you eat more than 1 cup of vegetables per day, give yourself 1 point.	
How many cups of fruit (including 100% fruit juice) do you consume per day?	If you eat more than 1 ½ cups of combined fruit or 100% juice per day, give yourself 1 point.	
How many ounces of red meat, hamburger, or meat products (ham, sausage, etc.) do you consume per day?	If you eat less than 4 ounces per day, give yourself 1 point.	
How many tablespoons of butter, margarine or cream do you consume per day?	If you consume less than 1 tablespoon per day, give yourself 1 point.	
How many sweetened, carbonated beverages do you drink per day?	If you drink less than 12 ounces per day, give yourself 1 point.	
How many 5-ounce glasses wine do you drink per week?	If you drink more than 3 glasses per week, give yourself 1 point.	
How many cups of legumes (e.g. beans, peas or lentils) do you consume per week?	If you eat more than 1 ½ cups of legumes per week, give yourself 1 point.	
How many ounces of fish or shellfish do you consume per week? (1 serving = 4 ounces of fish or 6 ounces of shellfish)	If you eat more than 12 ounces of fish or shellfish per week, give yourself 1 point.	
How many times per week do you eat commercial sweets or pastries (not homemade) such as cakes, cookies, biscuits, doughnuts or fritters?	If you eat commercial sweets less than 3 times per week, give yourself 1 point.	
Do you preferentially consume chicken or turkey meat instead of veal, pork, hamburger or sausage?	If you answered YES, give yourself 1 point.	
How many times per week do you consume vegetables, pasta, rice or other dishes prepared with tomato sauce?	If you eat dishes made with tomato sauce more than two times per week, give yourself 1 point.	
	<b>YOUR TOTAL SCORE</b> (Maximum Score = 14 points)	

## What does your Mediterranean Diet Score mean?

0-5	6-10	11-14
You likely need to make many changes to improve your diet. Start with small achievable changes, and gradually work your way towards a higher score.	You're making a good effort, but you can do more to improve the quality of your diet.	You're making good choices that lead to good health. Keep up the great work!

**Talk to your physician or a registered dietitian about ways you can improve your diet and reduce your risk of heart disease and other chronic diseases.**

Quiz adapted from the Mediterranean Diet Score by Estruch et al published in "Effects of a Mediterranean-Style Diet on Cardiovascular Risk Factors" *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 145:1.