

## Review Finds that Mediterranean Diet Improves Quality of Life

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The Mediterranean Diet (MD) is characterized by high intakes of olive oil, fish, nuts and fruits and vegetables. Health benefits of following the MD include helping maintain healthy blood pressure (1) (high blood pressure is expected to cost \$73 billion in 2009 to treat (2)), improving blood lipid profiles (3), supporting normal blood vessel function (4), [decreasing heart disease risk factors](#) (5) (which causes 1 out of every 2.8 deaths in the U.S. (6)), [increasing antioxidant levels](#) (7), [playing no role in obesity](#) (8) (which costs over \$100 billion per year (9)) and helping bone health in women (10) (osteoporosis costs more than \$18 billion per year to treat (11)).

Now a new review of the MD (12) has found that its core food components help improve the quality of life. In the study, more than 23,000 men and women participating in the Greek segment of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and nutrition (EPIC) study (13) who were not previously diagnosed with cancer, heart disease, or diabetes completed information on their nutritional and lifestyle factors through Jun 2008.

The nutrition part of the study asked participants about their consumption of the 150 most commonly consumed foods in Greece (14), divided into 9 categories. Adherence to the Mediterranean Diet was rated on a scale from 0 (least adherence) to 9 (most adherence). For all food groups except wine, participants scored 0 points for consumption of less than the amount that produces a beneficial health effect and 1 point for consumption of more than the amount thought to be beneficial.

For wine, men scored 1 point if they consumed between 10 and 60 ml of wine per day and women scored 1 point if they consumed between 5 and 25 ml of wine per day. They both scored 0 points for consumption over these amounts.

The researchers found that the food groups having the greatest positive effect on quality of life were moderate wine consumption (23.5%), low consumption of meat and dairy (16.6%) followed by increased vegetable intake (16.2%), and increased nut and fruit intake (11.2%). So while moderate wine consumption, and increased vegetable, and fruit and nut consumption had positive effects on quality of life, it was a decrease in meat and dairy consumption that produced a higher quality of life.

The role of "ethanol consumption" is in relation to wine, with the researchers attributing wine's role in reducing mortality risk because of the presence of resveratrol in wine that has been often cited as a primary reason for wine's health benefits (16).

For the researchers, "The dominant components of the Mediterranean diet score as a predictor of lower mortality are moderate consumption of ethanol, low consumption of meat and meat products, and high consumption of vegetables, fruits and nuts, olive oil, and legumes."

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