



Heart-Healthy Eating – Mediterranean-Style

Advice from the National Lipid Association Clinician's Lifestyle Modification Toolbox

Why should you eat heart-healthy?

Eating heart-healthy foods will lower your risk of heart attack and stroke. It can lower your cholesterol and triglycerides. Heart-healthy eating can help manage risk factors like blood pressure and blood sugar. The Mediterranean-style eating pattern is one heart-healthy eating pattern you can follow.

Choose colorful vegetables

Fill **½ your plate** with colorful, non-starchy vegetables:

- Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, and green beans
- Orange, red, and yellow peppers
- Dark greens like arugula, kale, or spinach

Choose lean protein foods

Fill **¼ of your plate** with lean protein foods (about 3 oz. cooked)

- Eat fish like salmon, tuna, and sardines 2 times a week
- Eat 1 meal a week with no meat - use dried beans, split peas, lentils, and soy foods for protein
- Chicken or turkey with no skin
- Lean red meat like “round” and “loin” cuts – only 1-2 times a month; avoid ground beef

Choose foods with healthy fats and oils

Extra-virgin olive oil is the main source of fat

- Other healthy oils are canola, corn, olive, safflower, and sunflower
- Other foods with healthy fats are avocado, unsalted nuts and seeds, and almond and peanut butter

Avoid processed foods

- Processed meats like bacon, sausage, hot dogs, pepperoni, jerky, and most deli meats
- Refined grains like white breads, rice and pastas

Choose high-fiber whole grain foods

Fill **¼ of your plate** with high-fiber whole grain foods:

- Barley, bulgur, and oats
- Brown or wild rice and quinoa
- 100% whole-wheat breads and pastas

Choose fruit with no added sugar

Make fruit your dessert

- Fresh or dried fruits
- Frozen or canned fruit with no added sugar

Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy foods or dairy-free options

1 – 2 servings a week

- Skim or 1% milk or part-skim cheese
- Low-fat yogurt with no added sugar
- Unprocessed cheeses, like feta and parmesan
- Fortified soy, oat, and nut milks with no sugar

Drinks and sweets

Choose mostly water



- A glass of wine is okay with your evening meal (5 oz.)
- Avoid drinks and foods with added sugar like sodas, cookies, desserts, candies, and ice cream

Limit Sodium and Salt

Flavor your food with herbs, spices, citrus juices, and vinegars

- Read the food label and choose foods with less salt

Eating the Mediterranean-style can be easy:

- **Breakfast:** Plain low-fat Greek yogurt with berries and walnuts, coffee or tea with no sugar
- **Lunch:** Whole-wheat pita packed with black beans, hummus, fresh spinach and tomatoes, a sliced apple, water
- **Snack:** ¼ cup raw almonds and baby carrots
- **Dinner:** Grilled salmon with brown rice, a green leafy salad with strawberries, raw pecans, avocado slices, with balsamic vinegar and olive oil, a calorie-free drink or 5 oz. wine, if desired
- **Dessert:** Cut-up seasonal fresh fruit



A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey.