

To your health



In 1826, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin stated an expression that has been used commonly in recent years: “Dites-moi ce que vous mangez et je vais vous dire ce que vous êtes”. In plain English: “you are what you eat”.

Due to an explosion of information readily available on the internet, there is an abundance of nutritional information and diets to hand, each claiming to be the healthiest way to eat. How reliable this information may be is questionable, often touting a ‘one size fits all’ approach and never accounting for the differences in all individuals. However, a panel of “health experts” including nutritionists and specialists in lifestyle diseases debated this topic where 41 different eating protocols were assessed. The diet that excelled being easy to implement, safe, nutritious and supportive to the heart and overall metabolism and also preventative against many lifestyle diseases, was the Mediterranean Diet (MD).

First described by American physiologist Ancel Keys in the 1960s, variations of the diet have been adopted by individuals worldwide for its aforementioned health benefits, in addition to supporting anti-ageing and longevity. Research on the MD shows reduced risk of chronic diseases, including: Cardiovascular disease, Type-2 diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome, and all neurodegenerative diseases.

Historically, the MD is not really a “diet” in the sense it is usually interpreted but rather a lifestyle reflecting the diets of people living along the Mediterranean Sea. Emphasis is on eating fresh, locally-sourced and seasonal food high in nutrients and fibre, eaten socially and includes plenty of mountain or coastal walking with an abundance of Vitamin D from sunlight.

One of the best nutritional benefits of the MD is rich selection of colourful vegetables and olive oil rich in healthy fat. A typical MD plate would

be half-full with vegetables whilst the other half would be equally divided between whole grains and a protein such as fresh seafood or meat. Dressings usually supply the healthy fat in the form of olive oil.

This ancient oil seems to be a key factor in the health of the MD, especially its use in preparing meals. In a March 2019 study, researchers found that garlic, onion and tomato, common ingredients in Mediterranean cuisine, transferred their bioactive compounds, known as polyphenols and carotenoids, into extra virgin olive oil and rendering them more readily available for the body to absorb and use. This suggests that cooking in extra virgin olive oil may provide a beneficial cooking technique for supporting health.

It is important to consider that it is possible to lose the potency of some of the oil’s benefits with heat. Using it raw on salads and in dressings would be more supportive.

Monosaturated fatty acids found in olive oil may help reduce the LDL type of cholesterol which in some individuals can accumulate in blood vessels and create inflammation negative to heart health. In addition it may help elevate HDL cholesterol which has a positive impact upon heart health. Additional benefits of extra-virgin olive oil include supporting skin health and hydration under the drying effects of the sun. It can be applied topically to moisturise skin and condition hair.

To optimise the greatest health benefits of olive oil, make sure to use “extra-virgin” olive oil and particularly an EVOO mono-varietal (made from one type of olive).

3 TOP MD FOODS

FISH

Traditionally animal proteins are eaten in smaller quantities. Fish is eaten more regularly which is

less fatty than red meat and easier for the body to break down and digest. Fatty fish such as anchovies and salmon contain beneficial fat compounds called Omega-3 fatty acids which are supportive to brain and eye health and the naturally anti-inflammatory properties act as a cardiovascular protector, helping to lower the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Fish also contains calcium, phosphorus and minerals such as iron, zinc, iodine, magnesium and potassium.

GARLIC

A key ingredient of the MD and is known to help regulate blood pressure. It is also a natural antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and protective against many viruses, bacteria and fungi. A single clove of garlic contains more than 2,306 chemical compounds that have a positive synergistic effect upon health. Most commonly known are the sulphurous compound, allicin, and another called luteolin which has cardiovascular protecting properties. Garlic is rich in numerous nutrients such as vitamin A, B1, B6, C, selenium, calcium, magnesium and potassium all contributing to immune system support.

Tip: Cooking can destroy many beneficial qualities of garlic. Chop garlic 10 minutes before use and add to cooking just before serving to retain nutrients.

TOMATO

Tomatoes are red fruits and contain an abundance of protective compounds, as well as being rich in Vitamins C, A, B1, B6, calcium, copper, magnesium, phosphorus and manganese. The compound known as lycopene is well researched to have protective effects to the skin and has been associated with reduced risk of prostate cancer and improved cardiovascular health.

**CHRISTINE
KJELDBJERG**



Originally from Berkshire in the UK, Christine has been living in the Riviera since 2006. She is a Pilates & Xtend Barre instructor with a BSc in nutritional therapy and an MSc in personalised nutrition. She has a busy fitness and health coaching business in Grasse and runs various educational workshops.
www.ck-health.com