Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Mediterranean Diet

This information describes the common uses of Mediterranean Diet, how it works, and its possible side effects.

Tell your healthcare providers about any dietary supplements you're taking, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and natural or home remedies. This will help them manage your care and keep you safe.

What is it?

The Mediterranean diet is associated with a reduction in the incidence of many diseases, but may not be suitable for everyone.

A Mediterranean diet is commonly consumed in regions that border the Mediterranean Sea. It consists of a variety of fruits, vegetables, cereals, legumes, poultry, fish, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and moderate intake of red wine with meals. The Mediterranean lifestyle also promotes social connection by sharing meals with family and friends. Epidemiological studies show that the Mediterranean diet is a model of healthy eating that contributes to better health and overall quality of life, and can reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, certain cancers, and death.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- **Heart disease**
  Several studies support this use.

- **Disease/cancer prevention**
  The Mediterranean diet has been shown beneficial in several studies.
- **Weight management**
  Several studies support its use for weight loss.
- **Diabetes management**
  Mediterranean diet was found helpful in managing diabetes.
- **Cholesterol management**
  Several studies support this claim.

What else do I need to know?

Do Not Take if:

- You have **certain food allergies:** The Mediterranean diet consists of a variety of grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts/seeds.

Special Point:

- It is advisable to avoid/reduce foods such as red/processed meat, high dairy, and artificial preservatives for health maintenance.
- Cancer patients may have special nutritional needs and should consult a dietician before adopting new diets.
- Alcohol consumption can increase the risk of certain cancers.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Mediterranean Diet - Last updated on February 16, 2023
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