

Mediterranean Diet Helpful for Long-Term Healthy Weight

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, January 28, 2009, abstracted from "Intake of Fruits and Vegetables in Relation to 10-year Weight Gain Among Spanish Adults" in the March 2008 issue of *Obesity*

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The Mediterranean Diet (MD) is characterized by high consumption of olive oil, fish, nuts and fruits and vegetables. Its health benefits have been shown to include helping decrease mortality by 23 percent (1), helping to [increase antioxidant levels](#) (2), improve [mental health](#) (3), [peripheral vascular health](#) (4), [blood sugar health](#) (5), [lung health](#) (6) and [heart health](#) (7), and also [not contributing to obesity](#) (8).

Now a new study (9) has found that the MD may not only help with obesity, which costs our healthcare system as much as \$250 billion per year (10), but it may do so over a period as long as 10 years. In the study, researchers randomly selected 206 people representing residents older than 15 years of age in Valenica, Spain (11). Information was collected on weight and body mass index, physical activity, television viewing, educational level, marital status, smoking habits, alcohol consumption, sleeping habits, and medical history variables over the course of 10 years.

The residents also provided information on their consumption of 10 different fruits (orange; apple; peach, nectarine, or apricot; watermelon, or melon; grapes; cherry; strawberry; fig; banana; olives) and 12 different vegetables (garlic; egg plant, zucchini, or cucumber; onion; mushrooms; cabbage; spinach; asparagus; green, red, yellow pepper; tomato; lettuce; carrot; legumes) (12)

The researchers found that weight gain over the course of 10 years was "significantly lower" among those with the highest intakes of fruits and vegetables. Specifically, those with the lowest intake of fruits and vegetables (less than 362 grams per day) gained 78% more weight (15.84 lbs vs. 3.52 lbs gained) than those with the highest intake (more than 698 grams per day) over the course of 10 years. These results confirm previous studies in postmenopausal women (13) and other research looking at fruit and vegetable consumption and significant weight gain (more than 55 lbs weight gain) (14).

For the researchers, "high intake of fruits and vegetables in Mediterranean populations may reduce long-term risk of subsequent weight gain and obesity among adults."

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