

[IMAGE]

Mediterranean Diet Good for the Heart

The health benefits of the Mediterranean diet (which emphasizes whole grains, large amounts of fruits and vegetables, fish and olive oil, and low amounts of red meat and alcohol) are well-known. Interestingly enough, few studies have documented what happens when relatively healthy people switch their eating patterns to a Mediterranean-style diet. The purpose of this study was to determine what types of benefits healthy people can get from a Mediterranean diet, and to see how it compared to a traditional low-fat diet.

In the study, researchers assigned 212 men and women who were moderately at risk for cardiovascular disease into one of two diet groups. One group switched to eating a Mediterranean diet for three months, while the other group stayed on a low-fat diet (also for three months). The guidelines for the Mediterranean diet were as follows:

- high levels of nuts, whole-meal bread, cereals, and raw, cooked, fresh or dried fruit, vegetables and legumes;
- intake of at least seven milligrams of carotenoids each day from fruits and vegetables;
- consumption of fish four times per week;
- consumption of red meat only one time per week;
- intake of 25 grams of fiber per day;
- a maximum calcium intake of 800 milligrams per day; and
- a maximum of two glasses of red wine per day for men (one glass per day for women).

Patients in both groups consumed fewer calories than they had on their previous diets, and showed small - but significant - decreases in body mass index over the course of the study. Among people on the Mediterranean diet, total cholesterol levels dropped by an average of 7.5 percent, compared to 4.5 percent among low-fat diet patients. Based on this reduction, the researchers estimated that the overall risk of cardiovascular disease fell 15 percent for Mediterranean diet patients.

If you are considering losing weight or are thinking about going on a diet, the Mediterranean-style diet appears to be a safe, healthy option that provides a wealth of advantages. In addition, ask your doctor of chiropractic about crafting a dietary plan that can provide you with the benefits you're looking for. For more information on diet and overall wellness, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/general .

Vincent-Baudry S, Defoort C, Gerber M, et al. The Medi-RIVAGE study: reduction of cardiovascular disease risk factors after a 3-month intervention with a Mediterranean-type diet or a low-fat diet. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Nov. 1, 2005;82(5):964-71.

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