

Chapter 5: The Modified Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet (figure 1), which is generally thought of to be heart healthy, consists of lean meats, fruits and vegetables of all kinds, whole grain bread products and a limited amount of oil and fat. It does not include sodas or a lot of sugar. This diet is a big improvement to the standard American (SAD) diet.

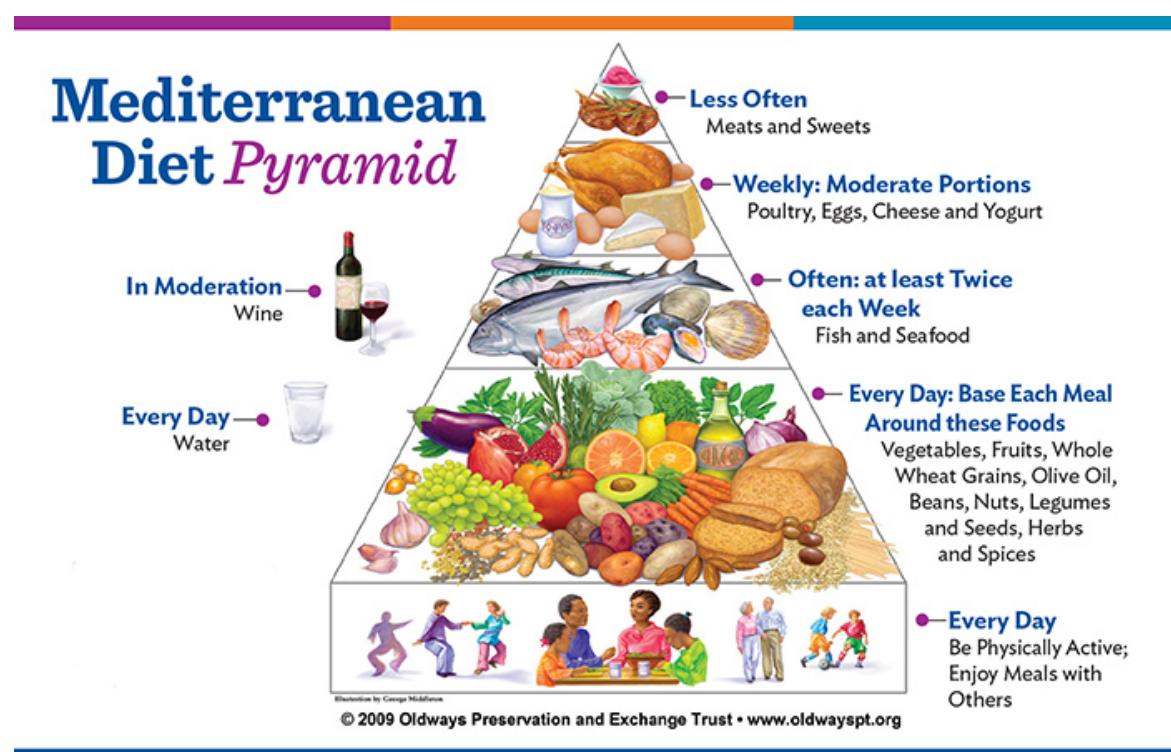


Figure 1. The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

The Mediterranean diet is perfectly fine for individuals who are not overweight, obese or insulin resistant (see chapter 2). However, for the two thirds of Americans who have insulin resistance,

whether they are aware of it or not, it is not adequate. Further carbohydrates restriction is needed.

A modified Mediterranean, that is the standard Mediterranean diet that is lower carbohydrates, may be more prudent for the very healthy and helpful for those with mild insulin resistance and to lose weight. Such a modified Mediterranean diet looks like the following:

Meats: There is no restriction to just eating lean meats such as chicken breasts and fish. Any meat can be consumed without excluding fattier cuts. As a matter of fact, fattier cuts of meat are encouraged!

Vegetables: All types of vegetables are okay with this diet. There is no distinction between those vegetables which grow above the ground and those which grow a below the ground. As long as the vegetables are not processed. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots and other vegetables are okay.

Fruits: Fruits of all kinds may be eaten. There are no restrictions based on their sugar content. Though, eating more than one serving at one sitting should be discouraged.

Dairy: There are no restrictions on fat content, those containing higher fat content are encouraged. One can eat sour cream, unprocessed cheeses, whole milk and heavy whipping cream.

Fats and oils: Natural fats are preferred. Natural fats may be eaten without limits or other restrictions. Olive oil, coconut oil, avocado oil, butter and ghee are favored. Artificial fats such as margarine, corn oil, soy bean oil, sunflower oil, peanut oil and canola oil are discouraged.

Sugar: Sugar in all forms is discouraged. Sweets should be a rare treat and not a regular part of anyone's diet, for example, 3 scoops of ice cream each night while watching TV.

Drink: Adults really do not need to drink calories of any kind. So, water, sparkling water, coffee and tea are ideal. However, fruit juices, vegetable juices, smoothies made with fruit and vegetables can be included on an occasional but not on a regular basis.

If excluding sugary sodas, fruit juices, pastries, candy and other unhealthy treats and eating a modified Mediterranean diet is not enough, further carbohydrate restriction may be necessary.