

Preventing Major Chronic Disease: Mediterranean-Style Diet

The latest research puts the Mediterranean diet back in the spotlight as a confirmed, preventive action in significantly reducing cancer and heart risks as well as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Francesco Sofi, from the Department of Medical and Surgical Critical Area, Thrombosis Centre, University of Florence, Italy, led the review, which systematically examined prospective cohort studies that analyzed the impact adherence to a Mediterranean diet has on mortality and chronic diseases. Published in the September 11, 2008 *BMJ*, the "Adherence to Mediterranean diet and health status: meta analysis" comprised 12 studies having a total of 1,574,299 subjects who were followed over a 3- to 18-year period.

Rather than focusing on individual components, the review looked at the whole Mediterranean diet—a plan longtime recognized for its contribution to favorable health and better quality life. Researchers were specific on defining what encompassed a Mediterranean diet, meticulously pulling apart data points and excluding studies that didn't adhere to their determined parameters.

Per the study, a one-to-nine score was assigned to each dietary component. Study subjects received a "one" if they consumed Mediterranean diet components beyond that of the median population's consumption. A maximum score of seven to nine points reflected high adherence to the Mediterranean diet.

Diet basics. Not actually "Italian" fare, the Mediterranean diet is based on the traditional diets of Southern Italy and Greece and is steeped in antioxidant-rich, omega-3 fatty acid foods. It comprises approximately 50%-60% carbohydrates, 15%-20% healthy protein, 30% healthy fats (predominately olive oil). At the core of this eating style are fresh, natural foods rather than the processed-laden, "too fat, too sweet, too salty" modern diets seen in Northern Europe and America, which may be diminishing our health and life spans. Generally speaking, a Mediterranean-style diet would contain . . .

- vegetables and fruits, five servings daily, brimming with vitamin C and E plus other antioxidants believed to reduce risk of neurological conditions, such as Alzheimer's
- good fats, mainly olive oil, known for its cholesterol-lowering, blood sugar-lowering and inflammatory-fighting properties
- legumes
- nuts and seeds, like a daily handful of walnuts, almonds, hazel nuts or pecans, which are low in saturated fat
- whole-grain bread, pasta and potatoes
- milk and dairy, moderate consumption
- fish, a few times a week
- poultry, lean meats and no (or little) red meat
- low-to-moderate red wine intake during meals, no more than 5 ounces daily for women (or men over age 65) and no more than 10 ounces for men under age 65—purple grape juice may be another health alternative to get similar antioxidant benefits, check with your doctor to see which is best for you

Study results. Per the review, a two-point increase in adherence was significantly associated with reduced risk mortality—including incidences of mortality from cancer and cardiovascular disease—and also proved beneficial in reducing incidences of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. Here's how the stats stack up:

- 9% reduction in all mortality incidences
- 9% reduction in cardiovascular disease risk
- 6% reduction in cancer risk
- 13% reduction in Parkinson's and Alzheimer's risk





But there may be even more to the story.

Per Cenegenics Senior Institute physician, Alvin B. Lin, MD, FAAFP, authors in a May 2008 study observed over 13,000 Spanish university graduates for over four years. The prospective cohort study—also published in the *BMJ*—examined adherence to a Mediterranean-style diet and risk of developing diabetes mellitus (DM). Dietary habits were assessed via a 136-item food frequency questionnaire, where participants could score upward of 9 points. Compared to those whose adherence to the Mediterranean diet was in the lowest third, study subjects with moderate adherence had a 59% lower incidence rate of DM while those in the highest tertile had an 83% lower incidence rate (each tertile accounted for 3 points). Just a two-point difference accounted for 35% relative reduction in DM risk.

Dr. Lin also noted that those scoring in the highest tertile for adhering to the Mediterranean diet were the most physically active, averaging 36.4 METs x hours/week, while those in the lowest tertile averaged only 24.1 METs x hours/week. (METs are metabolic equivalents: measurements of energy rate expended during exercise.)

Going one better: The Cenegenics way. The recent meta analysis comes at a time when experts purportedly believe that 80% of cardiovascular disease and 40% of varied cancers are preventable with diet, exercise and healthy lifestyle habits (no smoking or excessive alcohol, etc.). Echoing that sentiment, the World Health Organization conducted studies on chronic disease development factors and projected a 200% increase worldwide in certain cancers and Type 2 diabetes if we don't hearken the call and take preventive actions.

At Cenegenics, we've long realized that a proactive approach is critical for a longer health span. Our synergistic, four-pronged program—low-glycemic nutrition, exercise, nutraceuticals and endocrine balancing—is about preventing or delaying age-related diseases so you enjoy a totally different level of aging . . . one your grandparents never had the privilege to experience.

Part and parcel of that approach is a lifestyle shift with more daily activities and exercise, which ultimately help change your body composition for optimal health. For that reason, our low-glycemic nutritional plan uses a 40-30-30 approach, reflecting 40% quality carbohydrates, a higher-protein percentage of 30% (rather than the 15%-20% found in the Mediterranean diet) and 30% healthy fats.

There are many similarities between the Mediterranean diet and the low-glycemic plan: Both are plant-based, centered on fresh, whole food as well as good carbs and healthy fats. And yet, the low-glycemic approach takes you one step further, focusing on metabolic balancing via food combinations and smaller, more frequent meals, which is why it is the plan of choice for our highly regarded age management medicine program.

You're living in a historic time as we enter a new age in medicine. Cenegenics can guide you into this 21st century paradigm, taking you beyond the conventional to an entirely new level of care and a vibrant, quality life as the years march on.

The science behind our medical specialty, age management medicine, allows us to improve your health span by identifying and meeting criteria that places you in the lowest possible risk category for disease, including Alzheimer's, heart disease, diabetes, metabolic syndrome and stroke.

Before beginning your customized "healthy aging" lifestyle, you'll undergo a highly comprehensive evaluation process—far more intensive and much more revealing than annual checkups—to determine your metabolic and physiologic baselines. Then our expert age-management medical team takes that data and works with you to design a program tailored to your short- and long-term health goals and needs. Along the way, our nutritionist/exercise physiologist will walk you through the nutritional debates and latest study findings, helping you make educational decisions so you can get and stay on the right health track.

Mounting research continues to support our proactive approach, and our established protocols continue to garner global media attention. Without a doubt, optimal health is within your grasp, it just takes the right preventive actions.

Take the first step now. Learn more about personalized Cenegenics programs and the science behind age management medicine.

**Call Cenegenics Medical Institute today. 866.953.1510.
Discussions are always confidential and without obligation.**