

food for life

Stay healthier and live longer by eating, drinking and being merry — the Mediterranean way

BY DR. ART HISTER



A Mediterranean diet significantly reduces your risk of diabetes, heart attacks, strokes, and a host of other medical conditions

The best thing about enjoying a Mediterranean diet — which in general emphasizes eating lots of fresh veggies and fruit, healthy oils like olive oil, nuts, beans, small amounts of dairy products, and fish rather than meat (although neither in huge dollops) — is not that it can help you live longer, although it certainly can.

One excellent large study found a 23 per cent lower risk of death after just four years for those who followed

a Mediterranean diet most closely. Believe me, if that study had gone on longer, that difference would have been much greater. In other words, folks, while you still have to die eventually, you can put that unpalatable event off well into the future by eating right.

Nor is the best thing about a Mediterranean diet that it significantly reduces your risk of diabetes, heart attacks, strokes and a host of other medical conditions — which it certainly does and then some.

For example, the famous

Lyon Diet Heart Study, one of the first studies to compare eating habits among heart attack survivors, found a nearly 75 per cent drop in second heart attacks among those Lyonnais who followed a Mediterranean diet compared to those who ate less like southern Frenchmen and more like heart-attack-seeking Americans.

More recently, another study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* explored the health of diabetics. It compared those

“good cholesterol”), and most importantly perhaps, better glucose levels, requiring far less medication to help them control their diabetes.

Nope, despite all these benefits, the best thing about a Mediterranean diet is that it tastes so good. Take it from this boy, who lives to eat. I’ve been following this diet for the last 15 years or so, and it’s simply yummy.

Best of all, because there really is no one all-

diabetics who followed a much-hyped low-fat diet (the American Heart Association, for example, pushes low-fat eating), to those who followed a Mediterranean diet. After four years, the Mediterranean diet group had:

- lost more weight;
- developed trimmer waistlines (they redistributed their weight away from their bellies, where fat tends to have a more negative effect, to other areas of the body);
- improved heart disease risk factors, especially better cholesterol profiles (higher levels of HDL, for example, the all-important so-called

inclusive Mediterranean diet — clearly, the people in Crete eat differently than the people in Italy, who eat differently than the French (everyone eats differently from the French), who eat differently than Israelis and so on — you can make so many substitutions in following a Mediterranean diet that you will never run out of delicious new things to eat.

And you will live longer and be healthier as a consequence. Not a bad deal for just relearning to eat the way we were meant to eat. ■

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