

The Mediterranean diet is definitively linked to quality of life

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Main meals should never lack the three basic elements: cereals, fruit and vegetables, and dairy products. Credit: SINC

For years the Mediterranean diet has been associated with a lesser chance of illness and increased well-being. A new study has now linked it to mental and physical health too.

The Mediterranean diet, which is characterised by the [consumption](#) of fruit, vegetables, pulses, fish, [olive oil](#) and [nuts](#), has been proven to be beneficial to the health in terms of a lesser chance of [chronic illness](#) and a lower mortality rate.

A new study headed by the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the University of Navarra took the next step and analysed the

influence of the Mediterranean diet on the quality of life of a sample of more than 11,000 university students over a period of four years.

"The progressive aging of the population in [developed countries](#) makes it even more interesting to find out those factors that can increase quality of life and the health of the population," as explained to SINC by Patricia Henríquez Sánchez, researcher at the centre in the Canary Islands and lead author of the study.

Dietary intake data was taken at the beginning of the study and self-perceived quality of life was measured after the four year monitoring period. In order to ascertain whether the Mediterranean diet was followed, consumption of vegetables, pulses, fruit, nuts, cereals and fish was positively valued whereas consumption of meat, dairy products and alcohol was negatively valued.

Published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, the results reveal that those who stick more to the Mediterranean diet score higher on the quality of life questionnaire in terms of physical and mental well-being. This link is even stronger in terms of physical quality of life.

The Mediterranean Pyramid

Henríquez states that "the [Mediterranean diet](#) is an important factor associated with better [quality of life](#) and can be considered as a healthy food model." Its food pyramid combines food to be eaten daily, weekly and occasionally.

Main meals should never lack three basic elements: cereals, fruit and vegetables and dairy products. Furthermore, it must include a daily intake of 1.5 and 2 litres of water. Olive oil constitutes the main source of fat for its nutritional quality and moderate consumption of wine and other fermented beverages is recommended.

Furthermore, fish, lean meat and eggs are sources of high quality animal protein. Fish and seafood are also sources of healthy fats.

At the top of the pyramid are sugar, sweets, cakes, pastries and sweetened beverages that should be consumed occasionally and in small amounts.

More information: P. Henríquez Sánchez, C. Ruano, J. de Irala, M. Ruiz-Canela, M.A. Martínez-González, A. Sánchez-Villegas.

"Adherence to the Mediterranean diet and quality of life in the SUN Project". *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2012; 66(3): 360-8

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