

Mediterranean diet improves health

July 25 2012



Associate Professor Catherine Itsiopoulos of the Centre for Dietetics at La Trobe University highlights the benefits of a Mediterranean diet and lifestyle in a new La Trobe University podcast.

"The Cretan diet has the lowest death rate from [heart disease](#)," says Dr. Itsiopoulos. "The diet is abundant with [plant food](#) and low in meat fat, and can be very simple and easy to implement."

Research has also shown marked improvement in condition amongst those who suffer type two diabetes.

"After three months on a Cretan diet the participants found not only had their blood glucose levels improved but also general well being; they report an increase in mood and energy as well as looking healthier," says

Dr. Itsiopoulos.

"The staple fat in a Mediterranean diet for thousands of years has been olive oil, it is a monounsaturated fat so helps to improve the balance of good and bad cholesterol. Whilst extra virgin olive oil is rich in anti-oxidants.

"We are currently working on new studies to see the effects of a [Mediterranean diet](#) on depression and reversing fatty liver, which leads to diabetes," says Dr. Itsiopoulos.

From research findings Dr. Itsiopoulos has established ten key principles for implementing a healthy Mediterranean style diet into any type of cuisine:

- Use [olive oil](#) as the main added fat (60 mls/day)
- Eat vegetables with every meal (include 100g leafy greens and 100g tomatoes, and 200g other vegetables/day)
- Include at least two legumes meals (250g serve) per week
- Eat at least two servings of fish (150-200g serves) per week and include oily fish
- Eat meat (beef, lamb, pork and chicken) less often and not more than once per week
- Eat fresh fruit everyday and dried fruit and nuts as snacks or dessert
- Eat yogurt everyday but cheese in moderation
- Include wholegrain breads and cereals with meals
- Consume wine in moderation (1-2 glasses per day) and always with meals, don't get drunk
- Only have sweets or sweet drinks for special occasions.

Provided by La Trobe University

Citation: Mediterranean diet improves health (2012, July 25) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-mediterranean-diet-health.html>

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