Get to know the mediterranean diet

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(HealthDay)—The diet followed by people who live in countries around the Mediterranean Sea has been shown to be more than just delicious. The so-called Mediterranean diet can help you limit daily calories so you

can lose weight. Plus, it's a healthy long-term way of eating.

The main focus of the Mediterranean diet is on eating plant-based foods. That means including fruits and vegetables in every meal, and eating them for snacks and dessert, too.

Switch from refined to whole-grain foods, including breads, cereal, rice and pasta. Also add legumes like peas and beans. Try to eat a vegetarian dinner one or two nights a week.

People who successfully lose weight while following a Mediterranean diet generally get about a third of their calories from healthy fats, including a small handful of nuts each day.

Other tips:

- Switch from butter to olive oil.
- Limit red meat to just a few times a month, and have smaller amounts than you're probably used to—just a 3-ounce serving.
- Eat more chicken and fish. In fact, have fish at least twice a week. Fatty fish like salmon and sardines are among the healthiest choices.
- Choose low- or no-fat dairy products over high-fat ones to cut out more saturated fat.

As a bonus, if you like red wine, you can say cheers to one glass a day.

  More information: The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a detailed portion chart to help you plan menus for the Mediterranean diet.