

Meta-analysis of randomized clinical trial data shows Mediterranean diet is good for children and teens

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A team of medical researchers from Universidad de Las Américas, in

Ecuador, Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria de Navarra, Pamplona, in Spain and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, in the U.S., has found evidence suggesting that children and teenagers gain health benefits similar to that of adults from eating the Mediterranean diet.

For their paper [published](#) in *JAMA Open Network*, the group analyzed data from nine randomized controlled [clinical trials](#) that involved the study of diet in children.

Prior evidence has shown that people switching from a traditional western diet to the Mediterranean diet typically experience weight loss, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and lowered [blood sugar](#), [blood pressure](#) and cholesterol.

For this new study, the research team wondered if children and teens would see the same benefits. They conducted a [meta-analysis](#) of randomized clinical trial data from studies that focused on the impact of eating habits in children and teens.

The data came from nine clinical trials that together involved the participation of 577 children with an average age of 11. Roughly 60% of the volunteers were girls. Six of the studies involved dietary habits of children who were overweight and one involved children who were diagnosed as prediabetic.

The other two trials involved children who were neither overweight nor diabetic, and because of that they served as a control group for this new study. All of the children in all nine trials were asked to go on a Mediterranean diet for a period of time.

The research team found that those children who had adhered to the Mediterranean diet for at least eight weeks, saw improvements in blood pressure, triglycerides, total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol levels and

also experienced increases in high-density lipoprotein cholesterol.

The team was surprised to find, however, that the diet did not lead to improvements in insulin resistance or glucose metabolism. The researchers suggest it might take longer for such changes to be seen with the diet. They conclude that the Mediterranean diet would be a healthy choice for most children and teenagers.

More information: José Francisco López-Gil et al, Mediterranean Diet and Cardiometabolic Biomarkers in Children and Adolescents, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.21976](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.21976)

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