

# A hypocaloric Mediterranean diet and daily exercise maintain weight loss

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Researchers have studied more than 600 patients aged between 55 and 75 years old with obesity or overweight and metabolic syndrome. Photo: (CC BY-SA 2.0) Credit: (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Following a Mediterranean diet low in calories and engaging in daily physical activity are proven to reduce body weight and cardiovascular risk in patients with overweight and metabolic syndrome, and to maintain these benefits after one year. These are the main findings of the PREDIMED-Plus trial involving more than 600 patients aged between 55 and 75 with obesity or overweight and metabolic syndrome.

Overweight or obese patients, particularly those with [metabolic syndrome](#), are advised to lose weight via lifestyle changes. The aim of these recommendations is to reduce their [cardiovascular risk](#); however, there is no scientific evidence that this beneficial effect can be maintained in the long term. Although low fat and low carbohydrate diets have proven effective in losing weight and improving cardiovascular risk, the benefits tend to diminish after a year.

With this investigation, the researchers from the

Human Nutrition Unit at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, in collaboration with 23 other research groups in the PREDIMED-Plus study, have evaluated the changes in body weight, fat accumulation and different cardiovascular risk factors after one year in 626 patients. The results show that the lifestyle changes included in the study are effective in maintaining clinically significant weight loss. After 12 months of intervention, 33.7 percent of the patients following the hypocaloric Mediterranean diet and daily exercise showed a minimum of 5 percent weight loss. These patients also showed improvements in those parameters related with glucose metabolism and certain inflammatory markers in contrast with those patients who did not follow the diet. Furthermore, for those patients with diabetes or at risk of diabetes, the benefits from these [lifestyle changes](#) were particularly high in terms of glucose control.

The researchers emphasize that in this study, the greatest weight loss was found after 12 months, which illustrates that weight loss was maintained over time. In the light of these results, the researchers expect that this [weight-loss](#) maintenance in response to the PREDIMED-Plus lifestyle programme can provide the same or more benefits for cardiovascular disease (myocardial infarction, stroke or mortality from these causes) in the long term. In fact, this is the main objective of the PREDIMED-PLUS trial.

**More information:** Jordi Salas-Salvadó et al, Effect of a Lifestyle Intervention Program With Energy-Restricted Mediterranean Diet and Exercise on Weight Loss and Cardiovascular Risk Factors: One-Year Results of the PREDIMED-Plus Trial, *Diabetes Care* (2018). [DOI: 10.2337/dc18-0836](https://doi.org/10.2337/dc18-0836)

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