

Adherence to Mediterranean diet and reduced risk of late-life depression

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Maintaining a Mediterranean-type diet may protect against symptoms of depression in later life, according to new research presented here at the American Psychiatric Association's 2019 Annual Meeting.

Adherence to a Mediterranean-type [diet](#) has long been recognized as being good for physical health and has been associated with longer life and reduced risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease. It may also have protective effects against cognitive decline in [older individuals](#). A Mediterranean-style diet generally emphasizes eating fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts, using [olive oil](#), eating dairy products, fish and poultry in moderation, and limiting red meat and sweets. It also emphasizes getting plenty of exercise and enjoying meals with family and friends.

Researchers from Hellenic Open University, Greece, led by Konstantinos Argyropoulos, M.D., Ph.D., conducted a [cross-sectional study](#) among the members of day-care centers for [older people](#), in East-Attica, Greece. Among all participants, 64 percent reported medium adherence to the Mediterranean diet and 34 percent showed high adherence. Nearly one-quarter screened positive for depressive symptoms. Depression was more common in women than in men.

Argyropoulos and colleagues found a diet higher in vegetables and lower in poultry and alcohol was associated with decreased likelihood of developing [symptoms of depression](#) or a diagnosis of [depression](#) later in life. "Our results support that depression in older adults is common and strongly associated with several risk factors," the authors conclude. "Adherence to a Mediterranean diet may protect against the development of depressive symptoms in older age."

The study does not prove cause and effect, the authors note, and could potentially reflect that people with depression have more difficulty maintaining healthy diets, exercise and other aspects of a healthy lifestyle.

The study's lead author, Argyropoulos, is a practicing psychiatrist and psychotherapist, a member of the academic staff of Hellenic Open

University and a research fellow at the University of Patras School of Medicine, Greece. Collaborators on the study include E. Machini, A. Argyropoulou, D. Avramidis, E. Jelastopulu, all participating in the postgraduate program "Aging and Chronic Diseases Management," a joint program of the School of Medicine, University of Thessaly and Hellenic Open University in Greece.

Provided by American Psychiatric Association

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