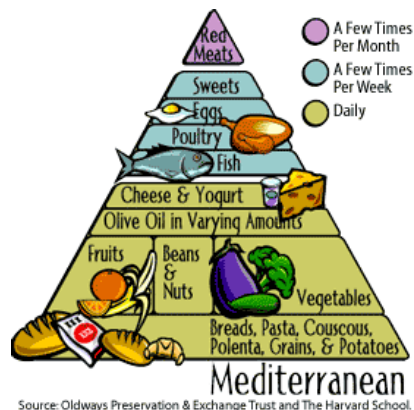


## THE BASICS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN PYRAMID

The Mediterranean diet pyramid is based on the traditional diets of people in Greece, Crete, and southern Italy in the early 1960's. During that time, the incidence of chronic disease in the region was among the lowest in the world and the life expectancy was among the highest in spite of the limited medical resources that were available at the time. Current scientific research is proving what has been suspected for many years - that the Mediterranean diet, in conjunction with the associated lifestyle, is synonymous with good health. The Mediterranean people not only make different "food choices" (see below), they also have a lifestyle that is beneficial to their health. They are more physically active and retain socialization as a vital component to their lifestyle. We all know the benefits of physical activity, and recently more and more evidence points to socialization and stimulation as being beneficial to physical and mental health.

The Mediterranean Diet Food Pyramid was developed by the World Health Organization, Harvard School of Public Health, and the Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust, and offers another healthy diet alternative. This food pyramid reflects the traditional Mediterranean diet and is based on scientific research linking this diet to positive health outcomes. A number of research studies have confirmed that following this diet results in a lower risk of heart disease, a lower risk of cancer, and increased life expectancy.

This dietary plan emphasizes the consumption of plant sources such as vegetables, fruit, and whole grains, with fish, lean meats and olive oil. This diet is thought to be healthy because it provides a diet rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and the so called "healthy fats". Olive Oil is a "healthy fat" that is a good source of antioxidants, and eating fish regularly increases the diet in omega 3 fatty acids which has shown to provide reduced incidence of cancer and heart disease. The omega 3 fatty acids are healthy fats that are beneficial to the diet by lowering cholesterol and triglyceride levels, lowering blood pressure and for other anti-inflammatory properties. The Mediterranean Diet reflects a dietary pattern that is attractive not only for it's related health benefits, but also for its palatability.



### Highlights of the Mediterranean pyramid:

- Specific portions are not given. Instead, foods of the various levels are to be eaten "daily," "a few times per week" or "a few times per month."
- The foundation layer includes potatoes, polenta, couscous, bulgur and other grains. (The people of the Mediterranean use little refined grains.)
- Beans, legumes and nuts have a greater prominence, reflecting their status as a basic dietary staple.
- Fish, poultry, eggs and sweets are to be eaten just a few times per week.
- Olive oil is emphasized by having its own layer in the middle of the pyramid.
- Red meat, at the top of the pyramid, is to be eaten just a few times per month.
- Wine is recommended, in moderation.

*The authors of the Mediterranean pyramid recommend regular physical exercise, drinking 6 glasses of water a day and moderate consumption of wine. Purple grape juice may offer the same heart health benefits of red wine without the concerns of alcohol.*