

LIVING with DM

Characteristics of the heart-healthy diet

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The most recommended eating pattern for reducing the risk of heart disease is the **Mediterranean diet**, which includes plenty of fresh food of plant origin (**greens, vegetables, fruits, pulses, nuts**) and **fish**, uses **virgin olive oil** as the basic cooking fat and is characterised by low intake of meat and processed foods, sweets and sugary drinks.



Characteristics of the heart-healthy diet

- ★ **Virgin olive oil is the most suitable fat** for seasoning and daily culinary use. Sunflower, corn and soya oils, when subjected to high temperatures, undergo oxidative processes and should therefore not be used for frying.
- ★ It is recommended to eat **fish or seafood at least three times a week**, and two of those servings should be oily fish.
- ★ White or lean **meat** (without visible fat) **is acceptable up to three or four times a week**. Cured sausages and other processed meats are discouraged.
- ★ **Egg consumption is not harmful** and can form part of a healthy diet.
- ★ You should include at least **two servings of dairy products** (milk, fermented milk, cheese, yoghurt, etc.) per day, although products with added sugars are not recommended.
- ★ **Whole grains are preferable** to refined grains (wholemeal bread is better than white bread). It is advisable to eat a portion of pulses (beans, chickpeas, lentils) at least four times a week.
- ★ **Nuts (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts)**, in moderate amounts, have a clear benefit **for cardiovascular health**. It is recommended to eat a handful of raw nuts (equivalent to about 30 g) on a regular basis (daily or at least three times a week) and to avoid salted nuts.
- ★ Eating plenty of **fruit and vegetables** helps prevent cardiovascular disease. It is recommended to eat **at least five portions of these foods a day** prepared in a variety of ways, avoiding added sugars and fats and prioritising seasonal and local produce.
- ★ Processed **foods** should be avoided **in the diet and fresh** foods should be preferred.
- ★ Most cocoa products on the market contain added sugars and other fats and are not recommended, although dark chocolate **with a cocoa content of more than 70% can be consumed** in moderate amounts (**up to 30 g/day**).
- ★ **Sugary drinks** (soft drinks, juices) add a lot of calories to the diet and increase the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. **Replacing** these drinks with **water or unsweetened infusions** is very important if you want to reduce calorie consumption and the risk of these diseases and their complications.
- ★ Regular consumption of **up to five cups of coffee a day** (filtered or instant, with or without caffeine) or tea (green or black) **with no added sugar is beneficial for cardiovascular health**.
- ★ **Do not consume more than 5 g of salt per day**. An alternative to salt are culinary preparations based on lemon juice, herbs, spices or garlic. You should limit **consumption of precooked foods, canned foods, foods preserved with salt, carbonated beverages and cured sausages**, as they usually have a high sodium content.
- ★ Alcoholic **beverages** should be consumed **in moderation**. For those who do drink alcohol, the maximum acceptable intake is up to one fermented beverage per day for women and two for men (one unit is equivalent to 330 ml of beer or a 150 ml glass of wine), always at mealtimes and as part of a healthy diet.