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A Plant Based Diet or Mediterranean Diet: A Personal View

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Opinion Article

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INTRODUCTION

A plant based diet or Mediterranean diet is one of the nutritional recommendations that are used by the modern world, which is inspired by the ancient food patterns of Greece and some other countries.

Civilization has witnessed a drastic alteration in human life, which ranges from life style to work culture and also food habits. Our fast paced life style does not allow us to concentrate on the regular important issues of human health, therefore, impacting our very own kind with adverse health effects. Our ancestors were well aware of such situations and need and acted upon certain issues with highest priority.

PRESENT SITUATION

Due to time restriction in our daily activities, man started consuming preserved and unhealthy foods containing more fat content and limited protein content. Such behavior made human kind more prone to lifestyle associated disease conditions, such as, heart attacks, cancers of various kinds and several other types. Simultaneously, rapid changes in environmental conditions also showed negative impact on human being and its future survival. All these important factors compelled us to take the health issues, food habits and environmental pollution seriously and act on the situation immediately. An increasing trend of health consciousness is being observed in the recent times in all strata of our society irrespective of the socio-economic conditions.

HISTORICAL ASPECT

Following the saying, "Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease" by Hippocrates, we have realized why ancient culture was very much in vicinity with the nature considering all aspects of human life. It is well established from ample research data that Nature provides us the necessary sources we require to survive in this planet along with combating the deadly diseases. As days are passing, we are now learning all the ancient food habits in order to maintain our health. From the old saying we know that "Health is Wealth", we have initiated taking proper steps to rip the benefit of such wealth by inculcating all ancient food habits and changing the on-going trend.

CURRENT REQUIREMENT AND PERSONAL OPINION

Our deep investigations through scientific and cultural means enabled us to recognize the important health issues and their respective causes.

It has been an established fact that changes in the life style and food habits can change the health pattern too. Therefore, we realized that the Mediterranean diet or solely plant based diet is the best source to maintain a healthy life.

We all have unique nutritional requirements based on age, sex, ethnicity, regional food habits, associated health conditions

etc. So, it is cumbersome to specify a particular diet regime for all. In this context, personalized attention is mandatory from the nutrition specialists to provide opinion on individual diet plan, keeping the Mediterranean diet as the major diet regime.

There is a great saying by Hippocrates that “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food” which signifies that we have considered this important fact of food and medicine since ancient time. This emphasizes on the reality that if we take healthy food, it acts as a medicine against most of the diseases and disorders ^[1,2].

MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Depending on the available information so far, description of the Mediterranean diet is provided in the following section.

1. Taking primarily plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, cereals, legumes, nuts, fibres and so on.
2. To eat whole foods that are minimally processed and refined as little as possible.
3. Taking garlic, onion, leeks, Brussel sprouts, Cauliflower, Broccoli, Spinach, Purple Cabbage, Beets, Orange Bell Peppers, Avocado, Sweet Potato, Chard, Kale.
4. Beans, Tofu, Nutritional Yeast, Quinoa, Thick Rolled Oats.
5. Any kind of Berries (Blueberry, Cranberry, Strawberry, Raspberry).
6. Lemons, Cherries, Pomegranate, Red Grapes, Banana.
7. Flax Seeds, Pumpkin Seeds, Hemp Seeds.
8. Walnuts, Almonds, Pistachio Nuts, Pecans, Hazel Nuts, Peanuts.
9. Mushrooms: Button, Shiitake, Enoki, Cordyceps, Portobello, Maitake.
10. Spices that function as anti-inflammatory: turmeric, ginger.
11. Spices that function as antioxidants: black pepper, cloves, fenugreek, rosemary, amla, coriander, cumin, oregano, mint, Ceylon cinnamon.
12. Camomille, Green, and Hibiscus Tea. Coffee and Cacao Powder.
13. Popcorn (in an air popper with grape seed oil, turmeric and paprika).
14. A small amount of lean meat or seafood. A minimum amount of saturated fat.

A pictorial representation of the Mediterranean diet is provided in the below section ^[3].

From the Mediterranean diet pyramid (**Figure 1**) one can easily understand the type of food along with their proportions that can be taken for maintaining good health ^[4,5].

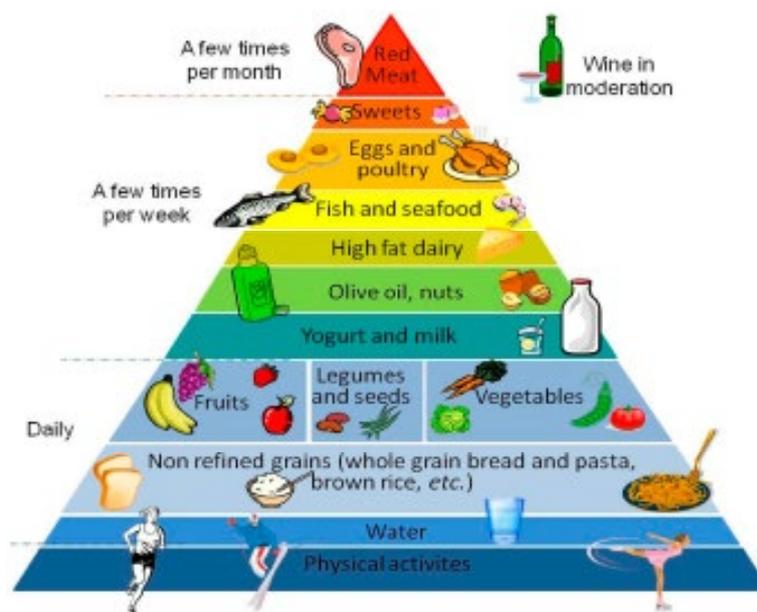


Figure 1. Mediterranean Diet Pyramid ^[3].

From the diet chart we can estimate that

1. Red meat, sweets, eggs and poultry food can be taken in small proportion.

2. Fish and sea food, high fat dairy, olive oil, nuts can be used in moderate proportions.
3. Yoghurt and milk, fruits, legumes and seeds, vegetables, non-refined grains like whole grains can be taken in larger proportions.
4. Of all these at utmost water and regular physical activities like exercises are to be done in order to maintain health.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To provide a long and healthy life to human being is the ultimate goal of medical sciences and ancient diet plan suits the requirement to harness the vitality of life form. We must follow the mandate in such diet planning and expect to have a better life. On the whole Mediterranean diet emphasizes on some vital aspects which should be strictly followed. One should take healthy food like vegetables and mostly plant based food in their regular diet. Olive oil is important and has enormous health benefits, so usage of olive oil rather than dairy byproducts and refined substances is suggested. Food substitutes should be avoided in daily diet. Similarly, refined carbohydrates and animal products are not recommended in Mediterranean diet. One should avoid eating processed and preserved food as much as possible. Salt and sugar intake should be nominal to avoid blood pressure and diabetes associated issues and other life style disease conditions. Limited amount of liquor is allowed but there should be a strict check on the quantity.

If the proper diet is controlled along with regular physical activities, one can live healthily and happily. Our life is in our hand, the only thing required is discipline, planning and strict following of the basic mandates. Hence, we may conclude that following proper diet along with taking plenty of water and regular physical activities like exercises can make a human being healthy.

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