

Your guide to

The Mediterranean Diet

Bonus:
5 sample
recipes

**Simple strategies
to help you thrive**

This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.



Welcome!

Planning healthy meals and snacks is at the heart of any wellness journey. But there is no one meal plan that is best for everyone. The colors, flavors and aromas of food help to connect us to who we are. Plus, we all have different nutrition needs, likes and dislikes, budgets and more. That’s why we created Your Guide to the Mediterranean Diet.

The guide is packed with healthy-eating ideas infused with Mediterranean flavors and features. The Mediterranean diet is often credited with having heart and other health benefits. The definition of the Mediterranean diet, however, isn’t fully clear-cut. The Mediterranean Sea touches many countries, each with their own ingredients and cuisines.

Generally, a Mediterranean diet centers around unprocessed plant foods like vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds and whole grains. It includes plant-based fats like olives and unsaturated oils, and fish as a regular source of protein.

Once we’ve briefed you on the foods that can be considered part of a Mediterranean diet, we’ll share meal planning tools and recipes. We hope this guide can help you create delicious meals that support your health goals.

Enjoy!

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Understanding the basics

Food is made of three basic nutrients that provide fuel to your body: carbohydrates, protein and fats. Knowing how the body uses each nutrient and meeting the goals below will help you build well-balanced meals that are healthy and satisfying.



Carbohydrates

Carbs are the sugars and starches that your body breaks down into glucose to use for energy. Carbs cause your blood sugar to rise. Too many of the less nutritious kinds, like added sugars, can cause weight gain and increase your risk of diabetes and heart disease. If you have diabetes, it's important to closely monitor carb intake.

Your goal: Choose moderate portions of the more nutritious carb foods. Avoid added sugars.



Non-starchy veggies

Non-starchy veggies are low in carbs and calories and are a great source of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

Your goal: Fill half of your plate with a variety of non-starchy veggies at each meal. It's not usually necessary to limit portion sizes like you do with other carb-containing foods—in most cases, you can eat as much as you desire. If you have a chronic condition that limits certain nutrients, make sure you consult with your doctor.



Protein

Protein helps build and keep muscle. It also helps you feel full. Protein has very little impact on your blood sugar.

Your goal: Include protein when eating carbs. This slows the rise of blood sugar following a meal or snack. Opt for lean or plant-based protein sources.



Fats

Fats help your brain and nervous system work and add great flavor and texture to food. When eaten alone, fats will not raise your blood sugar.

Your goal: Choose foods that contain healthy fats (poly and monounsaturated). Limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats.

Curious about how these nutrients translate into the foods you eat? Keep reading to take a look at our detailed [Your Food Groups](#) guide.

Your food groups

Figuring out what to eat? Below you'll find examples of foods that fall into each group. Depending on your health needs, you may be able to eat more than one serving at a meal. Use this as a guide to build a variety of satisfying meals that help you reach your goals.



Carbohydrates (starches)

One serving contains 15 grams of carbs and around 80 calories

Bagel	<i>1/4 large bagel (1 oz)</i>
Barley	<i>1/3 cup cooked</i>
Beans and pulse (cannellini beans, chickpeas, lentils, fava beans, etc.)	<i>1/2 cup cooked, also = 1 protein serving</i>
Bread	<i>1 slice (1 oz)</i>
Bulgur	<i>1/2 cup cooked</i>
Corn	<i>1/2 cup kernels or 1/2 large cob</i>
Couscous	<i>1/3 cup cooked</i>
English muffin	<i>1/2 muffin</i>
Farro	<i>1/2 cup cooked</i>
Green peas	<i>1/2 cup</i>
Millet	<i>1/3 cup cooked</i>
Oatmeal	<i>1/2 cup cooked</i>
Pasta	<i>1/3 cup cooked</i>
Plain potato	<i>1/2 cup cooked</i>
Polenta	<i>3/4 cup cooked</i>
Rice (brown or white)	<i>1/3 cup cooked</i>
Winter squash (acorn, butternut)	<i>1 cup</i>
Quinoa	<i>1/3 cup cooked</i>

Teladoc Health food groups



Carbohydrates (fruits)

One serving contains 15 grams of carbs and around 60 calories

Apple	1 small (4 oz)
Apricot	4 fresh
Banana	1 extra small or ½ large
Blueberries	¾ cup
Cherries	¾ cup
Clementine	2 small
Dried fruit (raisins, dates, apricots)	2 Tbsp
Figs	2 medium
Grapes	17 small
Grapefruit	½ large
Melon	1 cup, diced
Nectarine or peach	1 medium
Orange	1 medium
Persimmon	½ fruit
Pomegranate	½ cup arils
Plum	1 small
Raspberries or blackberries	1 cup
Strawberries	1¼ cups whole
Watermelon	1¼ cups diced



Carbohydrates (milk & yogurt)

One serving contains 6-12 grams of carbs and around 80-160 calories

Cow's milk (whole, reduced fat, skim)	1 cup
Kefir (plain, unsweetened)	1 cup
Rice milk (plain, unsweetened)	1 cup
Almond milk (plain, unsweetened)	1 cup
Soy milk (plain, unsweetened)	1 cup
Yogurt, Greek or regular (plain, unsweetened)	6 oz

Note: If food/drink is flavored or sweetened, read the label for more details.

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Protein

One serving contains 7 grams of protein and around 35-100 calories

Beans and pulses (chickpeas, Puy lentils, white beans)	<i>½ cup cooked also = 1 carb serving</i>
Cheese (chèvre, feta, haloumi, pecorino)	<i>1 oz</i>
Chicken, turkey, fish, shellfish, beef, lamb, goat, pork	<i>1 oz</i>
Eggs	<i>1 egg</i>
Egg substitute	<i>¼ cup</i>
Egg whites	<i>2 egg whites</i>
Greek yogurt	<i>⅓ cup</i>
Nuts and seeds (almonds, chestnuts, hazelnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts)	<i>1 Tbsp</i>
Nut spread, no sugar added (almond butter, tahini)	<i>1 Tbsp</i>
Ricotta cheese	<i>¼ cup</i>
Tempeh (check label for carb counts)*	<i>¼ cup</i>
Tofu*	<i>½ cup</i>



Fats

One serving contains 5 grams of fat, around 45 calories, usually 0 carbs, but always check the label

Almonds or cashews*	<i>6 nuts</i>
Avocado	<i>2 Tbsp</i>
Bacon	<i>1 slice</i>
Butter	<i>1 tsp</i>
Mayonnaise	<i>1 tsp regular or 1 Tbsp reduced fat</i>
Nut butters (butters (almond, cashew, tahini, etc.))	<i>1½ tsp</i>
Oil (olive, canola)	<i>1 tsp</i>
Olives	<i>8 black or 10 green</i>
Pecans and walnuts	<i>4 halves</i>
Pistachios	<i>16 nuts</i>

*Plant-based protein foods provide quality protein, healthy fats and fiber. They vary in how much fat and carbohydrates they contain, so make sure to read labels.

Teladoc Health food groups



Non-starchy veggies

One serving contains about 5 grams of carbohydrates and around 25 calories.
 ½ cup cooked or 1 cup raw for one non-starchy vegetable choice below:

Arugula	Garlic
Artichokes	Greens (lettuce, chicory, collard greens, dandelion greens, kale)
Asparagus	Leeks
Bell peppers (red, green, yellow)	Onions (green, red, sweet, yellow, shallots)
Broccoli	Okra
Brussels sprouts	Peppers
Cabbage	Radishes
Carrots	Rutabaga
Cauliflower	Spinach
Celery	Tomatoes
Cucumber	Turnips
Eggplants	Zucchini
Fennel	Winter melon



Don't forget about... herbs and spices

Seasonings can add minimal calories and sodium but pack loads of flavor.
 Use freely:

Basil	Lemon juice	Sage
Black pepper	Lime juice	Saffron
Cinnamon	Marjoram	Savory
Coriander	Mint	Sumac
Cumin	Oregano	Tarragon
Dill	Paprika	Thyme
Garlic	Parsley	Turmeric
Ginger	Ras el hanout	Vinegar
Herbes de Provence	Red pepper flakes	Za'atar
Lavender	Rosemary	

Use, but be mindful of sodium and/or sugar:

Anchovy paste	Dijon mustard	Harissa
Preserved lemons		

Balance your plate

You can eat well and still enjoy yummy meals when eating a Mediterranean diet. And in fact, the Mediterranean diet is an excellent fit for the balanced plate model. It naturally emphasizes lots of fresh produce, along with lean proteins, some carbohydrates and healthy fats.

The balanced plate model is an easy, delicious way to fuel your body. Following this format will help you fill your plate with healthy foods in the right proportions.

It's as simple as eyeballing it. A balanced plate has 50% non-starchy veggies, 25% lean proteins and 25% carbs. It may also include a little healthy fat.

Start with a **9-inch plate**. Measure your usual plates to see how wide they are. If they're bigger than 9 inches, try using smaller plates. You can also fill your regular plates to the 9-inch mark.

Use the Your Food Groups guide on the previous pages to help you fill your plate. You'll find lots of tasty options to help create a variety of balanced and satisfying meals. Plugging different foods into the sections of the plate can even inspire creativity and get you out of a rut.

50%

Non-starchy veggies = half of your plate

Options include: lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplant, mushrooms, onions, zucchini

25%

Carbs = a quarter of your plate

Options include: pasta, pita bread, rice, potatoes (opt for whole-grain choices when available)

25%

Proteins = another quarter of your plate

Options include: beans and lentils, poultry, lean meat, fish, eggs, tofu

*

Healthy fats = just a bit

Options include: olive oil, nuts, seeds, olives, avocado



Healthy portion sizes, any time

Now that you know how to balance your plate, it's important to consider how much you eat. When it comes to portion sizes, it can feel like the world is working against us. Restaurant servings for one can be big enough for a family to share. Even the plates we use at home have gotten bigger!

Luckily, you can retrain your eyes—and your stomach—to recognize what “enough” looks and feels like. Use your hand as a guide to estimate portions that will satisfy and help you reach your goals.



Fist

Whole grains, starchy vegetables, whole fruits



Palm of hand

Meat, fish, tofu, tempeh



Thumb

Dressings, dips, desserts



Two flat hands side by side

Total amount of food per meal



Flat hand

Non-starchy vegetables

How to build a healthy meal

Knowing what to eat is only the first step. Here are some strategies you can use to enjoy healthy foods that fit your nutrition needs:



Plan and shop

- Make a meal plan and shop for only foods that are on your plan.
- Don't be fooled by discounts. "Good deal" doesn't mean "good for you"!



Prep ahead

- Wash, cut, and store produce in containers right after grocery shopping.
- Cook once, eat twice: Prepare more than you need so you can enjoy leftovers, too.



Get cooking

- **Cut the fat:**
 - Cook foods in water or vegetable stock instead of frying in oil.
- **Slash the sodium:**
 - Skip the salt in recipes. Replace it with your favorite herbs and spices.
 - Try lemon juice and vinegar to tone down bitterness and sharpen flavors.
- **Bump up the veggies:**
 - Double the amount of non-starchy veggies in a recipe.
 - Grill, roast or steam veggies to mellow bitterness and help bring out their flavor.
- **Include lean proteins:**
 - Make sure your meals contain lean meat, fish, eggs, beans or tofu.
 - Cook using healthier methods: Grill, roast or sauté.
- **Choose whole grains:**
 - Experiment with brown rice and whole grain noodles instead of white rice and refined-grain pasta.
 - Remember that grains are also sources of carbs and calories. Portion size matters!



Eat and enjoy

- **Be mindful when eating:**
 - Avoid distractions like the TV, your phone or your tablet.
 - Slow your pace by putting down your fork between bites. Chew and savor!

Smarter snacks

Having a snack between meals can curb hunger throughout the day. Well-planned snacks can also keep you from eating too much at meals. Snacks that contain both produce and fat or protein are your best bet. That combo will help fill you up and keep you satisfied until mealtime.

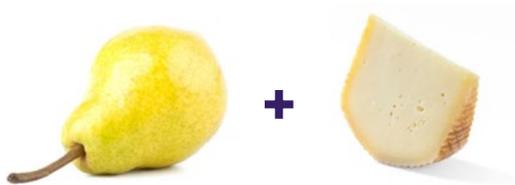
Here are a few dynamic snack duos:



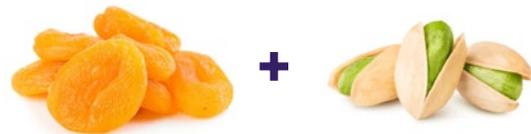
Cucumber + hummus



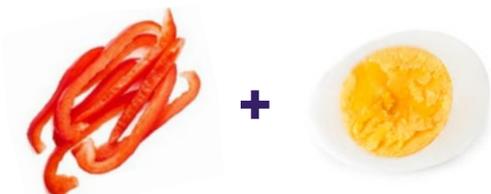
Radishes + labneh



Pear + pecorino



Dried apricots + pistachios



Bell pepper spears + hard-boiled egg



Plain Greek yogurt + fresh figs

If you're craving a snack, check in with your body. Are you low on energy? Is your stomach empty? Avoid eating when you're bored or stressed. Instead, save snacking for when you need extra fuel to make it to the next meal.

5 Sample recipes

TURKISH

Menemen (scrambled eggs with peppers)

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 10 min | Cook: 15 min



NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING (1/4 recipe)

Calories	Total fat	Sat. fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
172	10 g	2 g	106 mg	186 mg	16 g	8 g	5 g	10 g	577 mg

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and diced
- Pinch each of salt and black pepper
- 15 oz can diced tomatoes (no salt added)
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp Aleppo pepper
- 4 large eggs, beaten

PREPARATION

Heat olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion, bell pepper, salt and pepper and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, oregano and Aleppo pepper and cook until tomatoes are heated through, 2-3 minutes. Push vegetables to the side of the pan and pour in beaten eggs. Let cook for a minute or until just set, pushing occasionally with a spatula. When eggs are set, stir them into the vegetable mixture. Serve with bread, olives and feta cheese, if desired.

5 Sample recipes

FRENCH

Easy ratatouille

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 15 min | Cook: 30 min



NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING (1/4 recipe)

Calories	Total fat	Sat. fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
142	8 g	1 g	310 mg	0 mg	18 g	5 g	10 g	4 g	856 mg

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 medium eggplant, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/2 tsp each salt and black pepper, divided
- 2 medium zucchini or summer squash, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 medium red bell pepper, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 medium yellow or white onion, finely diced
- 4 large cloves garlic, minced
- 28 oz can diced tomatoes
or 2 lbs (5 large) fresh tomatoes
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp thyme
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

PREPARATION

Heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add eggplant and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until eggplant begins to soften and brown. Remove eggplant from pan and set aside.

Heat another tablespoon of olive oil in the same pan. Add zucchini, red bell pepper and onions and cook until vegetables are soft and starting to brown, about 10 minutes. In the last couple minutes of cooking, add garlic.

Add the eggplant back into the pan, along with tomatoes, basil, oregano, thyme, red pepper flakes, if using, and another big pinch of salt and pepper. Raise heat until tomatoes start to simmer, then lower heat back to medium. Cook for another 10 minutes. Adjust seasonings as needed. Serve on its own or with polenta or crusty bread.

5 Sample recipes

GREEK

Chopped salad

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 30-45 min | Cook: 30 min



NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING (1/4 recipe)

Calories	Total fat	Sat. fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
294	17 g	5 g	366 mg	17 mg	27 g	7 g	8 g	10 g	424 mg

INGREDIENTS

Salad

1 English cucumber, diced into small cubes

1 pint grape tomatoes, cut in half

1 orange or yellow bell pepper, seeded and diced

1/2 cup crumbled feta

1/2 medium red onion, peeled and diced finely

1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

Dressing

2 Tbsp red wine vinegar

3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

1 tsp dried oregano

Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Add dressing ingredients to a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Close the lid and shake vigorously. Toss salad ingredients with dressing and enjoy!

5 Sample recipes

MOROCCAN

Easy chicken tagine

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 20 min | Cook: 35 min



NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING *(1/4 recipe)*

Calories	Total fat	Sat. fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
303	15 g	3 g	553 mg	127 mg	12 g	2 g	6 g	30 g	201 mg

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- Pinch of salt
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 Tbsp minced preserved lemon
- 1 cup green olives, pitted
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped

PREPARATION

Combine all the spices—paprika, cumin, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon and black pepper—in a large bowl or Ziploc bag. Add the chicken and coat well with the spice mixture. Place in the fridge to marinate for at least 1 hour.

Heat 1 Tbsp olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed skillet or tagine on medium high heat. Add chicken thighs. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt and let brown, flipping once, about 6-8 minutes total. Remove chicken and set aside on a plate.

Lower heat to medium low and add remaining 1 Tbsp olive oil. Add garlic and onions and sauté until beginning to soften, about 5 minutes.

Add water, preserved lemon, olives, raisins and water and stir. Bring to a simmer, then add chicken, and cover. Continue to cook at a low simmer for another 20-30 minutes.

Stir in parsley and cilantro right before serving. Serve with couscous, rice or bread.

5 Sample recipes

ITALIAN

Fish puttanesca

Makes 6 servings | Prep: 10 min | Cook: 15 min



NUTRITION INFORMATION PER SERVING *(1/6 recipe: 1 piece of sole with 1/6 sauce)*

Calories	Total fat	Sat. fat	Sodium	Cholesterol	Carbs	Fiber	Sugars	Protein	Potassium
273	16 g	1 g	686 mg	8 mg	9 g	2 g	4 g	23 g	405 mg

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 anchovy fillets or 1 1/2 tsp anchovy paste
- ⅓ cup dry white wine
- 28 oz can crushed tomatoes
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- ½ cup halved, pitted olives
- 2 Tbsp capers, drained
- 1 ½ lbs sole, or other white fish, cut into 6 pieces
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ¼ cup fresh basil or flat-leaf parsley, chopped, for garnish
- Crushed red pepper flakes, for serving, optional

PREPARATION

Heat oven to 400°F.

Heat olive oil in a large ovenproof pan over medium heat. Stir in the garlic and the anchovies and cook for a minute or two.

Stir in the white wine and cook until slightly reduced, about 4 minutes. Add the tomatoes, oregano and thyme.

Bring the sauce to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in olives and capers. Arrange the fish on the sauce and sprinkle with salt.

Place the skillet or pan in the oven and cook until fish is cooked through and easily flakes with a fork, about 6 minutes.

Remove from oven and garnish with fresh basil or parsley and red pepper flakes, if using. Serve immediately.

Understanding food labels

Learning how to read food labels can help you make healthier choices. Use this guide to help you make the most of the Nutrition Facts label.

Keep in mind that the healthiest foods, like fruits and veggies, don't have food labels.

Step 1: what's in a serving?

- Read the number of servings per container.
- Learn the size of each serving.
- Remember, the numbers below are for ONE serving.
- If you're eating more than one serving, multiply the numbers below by that amount.

Step 2: aim for less:

- Saturated fat
- Trans fats
- Sodium (below 2,300 mg per day)
- Sugar
- Added sugars

Step 3: aim for more:

- Fiber
- Protein
- Nutrients like vitamin D, iron, potassium, and calcium.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

Step 4: check the ingredients list (separate from the nutrition facts panel)

- Ingredients are listed in by quantity, from highest to lowest.
- Avoid food additives like sodium nitrates and food coloring. These are likely processed foods.
- Avoid items with ingredients that contain the word "hydrogenated"—this means trans fat. Avoid added sugars, often listed as "high fructose corn syrup," "dextrose," "sucrose," "honey" and "molasses."

Dining out tips and tricks

Going to restaurants is a part of life. While it can be a challenge to dine out healthfully, it can be done! Restaurants featuring Mediterranean cuisines like Greek and Turkish can make it easy to build a balanced plate. But regardless of the type of restaurant you're eating at, you can order a meal that helps you reach your health goals. Here's how you can set yourself up for success:

Before you go

- Review the menu online to help make better choices when it's time to order. Keep an eye on preparation: Opt for red vs. cream sauces; braised, broiled or grilled vs. fried.
- Eat normally. Skipping meals just sets you up to be overly hungry when you sit down to order.
- Have a produce and protein snack an hour before the meal to curb hunger.

At the restaurant

- Choose the treat that you like best—drink, starter, bread or dessert—to go along with your meal. Enjoy it!
- Pick out a veggie-forward starter like minestrone soup or a green salad with vinaigrette.
- Opt for a protein- vs. starch-based entrée. For instance, choose a seafood dish rather than pasta.
- Cut your entrée in half. Pack up the rest to bring home as leftovers.
- Ask for lower-calorie options like salad dressing on the side, light oil on pasta and veggies, and grilled chicken instead of crispy!
- Stick with balanced plate portions: 50% non-starchy veggies, 25% lean protein, 25% carbs. Look for meals that already favor this proportion, such as a Greek salad with grilled shrimp and a piece of pita bread on the side.
- Chew food well and wait until you have swallowed your current bite to take another one.

It's okay if one meal isn't "perfect." But by planning ahead, you'll be able to stay closer to your wellness goals!

