

Michael Ozner, MD

The Complete Mediterranean DIET

with **500**
DELICIOUS
RECIPES

Everything You Need to Know to *Lose Weight*
and *Lower Your Risk* of Heart Disease



Foreword by **DEBBIE MATENOPOULOS**,
author of *It's All Greek to Me*

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
TO LOSE WEIGHT AND LOWER
YOUR RISK OF HEART DISEASE...
WITH 500 DELICIOUS RECIPES

The **Complete**
Mediterranean
Diet

*Lifesaving Advice Based on the Clinically Proven
Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle*

Michael Ozner, MD

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Cardiovascular Prevention Institute of South Florida



BENBELLA BOOKS, INC.

Dallas, Texas

This book is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to serve as a substitute for professional medical advice. The author and publisher specifically disclaim any and all liability arising directly or indirectly from the use of any information contained in this book. A health care professional should be consulted regarding your specific medical situation. Any product mentioned in this book does not imply endorsement of that product by the author or publisher.

Copyright © 2014 by Michael D. Ozner, MD

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.



BenBella Books, Inc.
10300 N. Central Expressway, Suite 530
Dallas, TX 75231
Send feedback to feedback@benbellabooks.com • www.benbellabooks.com

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this title.
ISBN 978-1933771-65-6

Proofreading by Stacia Seaman, Emily Chauvier, Maggie McGuire, & Erica Lovett
Front cover by Todd Michael Bushman • Full cover design by Laura Watkins
Text design and composition by John Reinhardt Book Design
Index by Shoshana Hurwitz
Printed by Bang Printing

Distributed by Perseus Distribution • perseusdistribution.com

To place orders through Perseus Distribution:
Tel: 800-343-4499
Fax: 800-351-5073
E-mail: orderentry@perseusbooks.com

Significant discounts for bulk sales are available. Please contact Glenn Yeffeth at glenn@benbellabooks.com or 214-750-3628.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my patients and colleagues who have given me the inspiration and motivation to write *The Complete Mediterranean Diet*.

I am especially grateful to the following individuals who have taken extensive time and effort to review and critique *The Complete Mediterranean Diet*: Barry T. Katzen, MD, a pioneer in interventional radiology and Medical Director of the Baptist Cardiac & Vascular Institute at Baptist Hospital of Miami; Randolph P. Martin, MD, Director of Noninvasive Cardiology at Emory University in Atlanta; and Karen Lieberman, PhD, RD, Professor and Chair of the Hospitality College at Johnson & Wales University, Florida Campus. I would also like to thank Nanette K. Wenger, MD, and Joseph L. Izzo, MD, for reviewing and commenting on *The Complete Mediterranean Diet*.

I would like to express my gratitude to all of the nurse educators who share my passion for cardiovascular disease prevention, and who have helped me organize and promote the Wellness & Prevention Program at the Baptist Cardiac & Vascular Institute at Baptist Hospital of Miami. This program provides education and prevention strategies for patients who have heart disease or diabetes and for those with risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

I am also grateful to Glenn Yeffeth, Leah Wilson, and Laura Watkins at BenBella Books for their steadfast guidance and advice.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Christine Ozner, RN, who has a special interest in nutrition and Mediterranean cooking and has contributed immensely to the writing and editing of this book.

To my wife, Christine, and my children, Jennifer and Jonathan:
You are my heart and soul.

Congratulations! By reading this book and following the principles of the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle, you will begin to take charge of your cardiovascular health.

This book is intended to provide information on cardiovascular disease prevention. However, it is *not* intended to replace the doctor-patient relationship. I recommend that you discuss all prevention and treatment options with your personal treating physician. Regular office visits between a patient and his or her doctor to discuss cardiovascular prevention strategies provide the optimum approach in the ongoing battle against heart disease.



Contents

Foreword	xi
----------	----

PART ONE

The Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle

How Your Diet and Lifestyle Are Affecting Your Health	3
The Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle	9
Why Choose the Mediterranean Diet?	19
Putting the Pieces Together	29
It's Your Choice!	45

PART TWO

Recipes

A 14-Day Menu Plan	51
A Guide to Cooking Method Terminology	71
Salads	73
Soups	99
Pizza, Pizza Sauces, and Pizza Crusts	117
Omelets, Eggs, Frittatas, and Cereals	135
Pancakes	143
Main Dishes	149
Side Dishes	235
Wraps and Sandwiches	269
Breads	281
Desserts	291

Smoothies and Coolers	329
Appetizers, Dips, and Snack Foods	335
Spices, Sauces, Marinades, and Dressings	351

Appendices

APPENDIX A: The Atherogenic Metabolic Stew	369
APPENDIX B: Important Medications for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention	371
APPENDIX C: Tips on Purchasing, Preparing, and Eating Foods in the Mediterranean Diet	373
APPENDIX D: Eating Out on the Mediterranean Diet (The Restaurant Survival Guide)	389
Glossary	391
Recipe Index	397
Index	407
About the Author	419

Foreword

We are at war in the United States of America, and our enemy is quite formidable. It has killed more people than all of the wars which we have previously fought. Every thirty seconds it claims another victim. We have identified this enemy but we have not defeated it.

Its name is cardiovascular disease.

Is there a solution? Can we defeat cardiovascular disease and its manifestations (heart attack, stroke, peripheral vascular disease)?

The answer is yes! First, we must realize that our most effective weapon is prevention, not intervention. Prevention strategies must begin at an early age and continue for life. Proper diet, exercise, stress management, the cessation of smoking, and appropriate medical therapies are the weapons most needed in our ongoing battle against heart disease.

It is my hope that this book will provide you with the information that you need to begin an effective prevention strategy. Don't sit back and wait for this silent killer to strike. Take action before you develop symptoms. Defeat cardiovascular disease and live a long, happy, and heart-healthy life.

PART ONE

**THE
MEDITERRANEAN DIET AND
LIFESTYLE**



How Your Diet and Lifestyle Are Affecting Your Health

Ted and Giovanni

It was a typical day for Ted. He awoke at 6 A.M. and had his usual breakfast of bacon, eggs, and fried potatoes. He left home in a hurry after an argument with his wife and drove to his office to begin another stressful day as a real estate executive. At a 9:30 A.M. board meeting, he presented a proposal for purchasing a large office complex. During the meeting he had coffee and doughnuts, and smoked several cigarettes. It was customary for Ted to argue with his partners, and today was no different. After several phone calls he was off to the airport to catch a noon flight. He had no time to sit down for lunch, so he went to his favorite fast food drive-through for a burger and fries, which he ate quickly on the way to the airport. After parking his car and walking briskly to the terminal, he felt a crushing chest pain and broke into a sweat. He grabbed a roll of Tums from his pocket and chewed several tablets. The pain subsided briefly, only to return with a vengeance several minutes later. This time the pain was an intense sensation of pressure in his chest that radiated out to his arms and his jaw. He collapsed at the security gate and lost consciousness. When he awoke, he was in a nearby emergency room, having been resuscitated by paramedics. It was clear that Ted had suffered a massive heart attack and was lucky to be alive. Following an extensive hospital stay including heart catheterization and coronary bypass surgery, Ted's life would never be the same.

Giovanni awoke the same day in his small Italian village. He ate a light breakfast of whole grain bread with jam and fruit. He walked to his nearby office and passed a pleasant morning with his clients in his import/export business. At 2:00 P.M., he returned home, where he shared an enjoyable lunch with his family and

friends. Lunch consisted of a salad with olive oil, whole wheat pasta, whole grain bread with garlic, goat cheese, red wine, and fresh fruit. Following lunch, he rested for an hour, and then returned to work.

Was Ted's heart attack preventable? Is Giovanni's good health a matter of luck? Or are both the consequences of diet and lifestyle?

The Toxic American Diet and Lifestyle

The American diet and lifestyle are toxic. Our food is contaminated with pesticides and preservatives, and contains an excessive amount of dangerous fats, sugars, and salt. We no longer exercise and our lives are plagued by chronic stress. In the last fifty years, there's been an explosive rise in heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity, diseases that have been directly linked to the food we eat and the lifestyle we lead.

We have been led to believe that the solution to this epidemic is to be found in medical or surgical intervention: in prescription medications and invasive surgeries. But despite the billions of dollars we spend on health care, we continue to suffer and die unnecessarily from diseases *that can be prevented*.

I have been practicing preventive cardiology for more than twenty-five years, and have helped countless numbers of patients discover the real secret of long-term health: the optimal nutrition and healthy daily practices of the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle.

Heart Disease: Your First Symptom May Be Your Last

Why do I practice preventive cardiology? Because heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in America and in most developed countries around the world—and most people never see it coming.

It would be nice if we had a warning system that alerted us to heart disease. Many people think chest pain is that warning system. Unfortunately, for the majority of men and women, the first symptom you experience is a heart attack—or sudden death. By then, it's too late.

In many respects, coronary heart disease is a silent killer—we are completely unaware of its presence in our body until a plaque ruptures and a heart attack occurs. Recent data has revealed that small plaques (which cause no symptoms) are in fact *more* likely than large plaques to suddenly rupture and lead to a heart attack or sudden death. The only way to defeat this formidable enemy, cardiovascular disease, is to attack when the enemy is most easily defeated—prior to the onset of symptoms!

The Mediterranean diet has been shown to reduce the risk of:

- Allergies
 - Alzheimer’s disease
 - Arthritis
 - Asthma
 - Cancer
 - Chronic obstructive lung disease
 - Depression
 - Diabetes
 - High blood pressure
 - High cholesterol
 - Inflammatory bowel disease
 - Metabolic syndrome
-

Believing in preventive cardiology doesn’t mean I think surgery is never a necessary step. There are absolutely situations where surgical or cardiac catheterization procedures are not only needed but may save lives, especially in the case of patients with “unstable” heart disease, meaning they have an impending heart attack or are actually experiencing one. However, the vast majority of patients a doctor sees in his or her office are not unstable. Rather, they are stable patients who either have risk factors for coronary heart disease or have “stable” blockages in their arteries. And too often, doctors rely on coronary artery bypass surgery and coronary stent placement when the best treatment for the patient is aggressive prevention, which can halt the progression of cardiovascular disease and potentially even reverse it.

Through my practice, I’ve learned that prevention is more important than medication or bypass surgery in achieving greater heart health. And together, diet and lifestyle can reduce or eliminate the need for expensive medications and risky surgical interventions.

Susan’s Story

About four and a half years ago, I awoke at about 5 A.M. with the most horrible pain in my chest and extreme shortness of breath. In a panic, and with an unbelievable sense of impending doom, I woke my husband, who immediately called 911. Forty thousand dollars later, through the grace of God, I had survived a major heart attack.

Seven months earlier, I had experienced a few minor symptoms that led me to see a group of doctors. They did some tests, performed a heart procedure to put a stent in one of my coronary arteries, and told me that I could go home and relax, because they had “taken care” of my problem. After my heart attack, those same doctors told me that I was “stable” now that they had put in a second stent, but that I should return to the emergency room if I experienced any more chest pain. I realized that I needed to do more than just wait for the next heart attack to occur. I needed to take steps personally that would help me avoid another such experience, or worse. I have two grown children and three adorable grandkids. I desperately want to be around to enjoy them and to spend those coveted golden years with my husband. There had to be more that could be done. I felt it was just a matter of time before I once again found myself lying on an ER stretcher, praying that I would survive. The word “despondent” barely describes my anxiety.

I was determined to learn more about heart disease and what my options were. A few months later, my husband learned about a cardiologist in Miami who exclusively practiced cardiovascular prevention. We learned that Dr. Ozner gave lectures on heart disease prevention to other physicians as well as to the general public. After doing some research, I began to feel there was hope for me, so I made an appointment to see him.

Dr. Ozner started me on the Mediterranean diet and a regime of medical therapy to lower my cholesterol and blood pressure. He also started me on a walking program. When Dr. Ozner first mentioned lifestyle changes and diet, I became concerned; I had tried other diets, but after the initial weight loss I would eventually gain the weight back. I began to realize that those diets didn’t make much sense. Dr. Ozner told me he had based the Mediterranean diet on a way of eating that has been in existence for thousands of years, and has been proven over the last fifty years to reduce heart disease risk.

I’ve lost a lot of weight on the Mediterranean diet and now maintain a normal weight. This is a diet I can live with for the rest of my life! As a matter of fact, it’s a way of life that my entire family can embrace; my entire family now follows the diet and exercise program.

As for me, I haven’t needed any more cardiac procedures and I feel better than I have in years!

Beyond Heart Disease Prevention

But this isn't just about heart disease. The Mediterranean diet and lifestyle lowers the risk of a multitude of chronic diseases. You may very well wonder how a single eating plan can afford all these benefits. That's a fair question. The secret seems to lie in the fact that the Mediterranean diet is *synergistic*. This means that the components are not only nutritious in themselves, but when combined with one another, act together to provide added benefits. They are more powerful in combination than if they were eaten separately.

The Mediterranean diet is full of fruits and vegetables rich in antioxidants, which help prevent the damage to your body's cells that cause heart disease, cancer, and other diseases. The diet also features whole grain foods rich in fiber, which has been shown to help balance cholesterol and also prevent some forms of cancer. In addition, the diet decreases inflammation, which has been strongly linked to the development of heart disease, cancer, and other ailments such as arthritis.

In short, if you're looking for a diet that will benefit your entire body, you can do no better than to choose the Mediterranean diet.



The Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle

The Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet—a diet of whole non-processed foods, rich in a wide variety of health-promoting vitamins and nutrients—is the ideal dietary plan for long-term heart health and weight control; multiple clinical trials have demonstrated its beneficial impact. Indeed, a landmark study from Spain was recently reported in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* (February 25, 2013) comparing a Mediterranean diet to a low-fat diet. The study was stopped after 4.8 years due to a highly significant 30 percent reduction in major cardiovascular events (heart attack, stroke, death) in those following the Mediterranean diet. As reported in the *New York Times* on March 2, 2013, medical experts stated, “This is a watershed moment in the field of nutrition. For the first time, a diet has been shown to have an effect as powerful as drugs in preventing what really matters to patients—heart attacks, strokes and death from cardiovascular disease.”

A brief summary of some of the other important clinical trials demonstrating a beneficial impact of the Mediterranean diet on cardiovascular health:

The Seven Countries Study

This landmark twenty-year study by Dr. Ancel Keys demonstrated that a diet low in saturated animal fat and processed food was associated with a low incidence of mortality from coronary heart disease and cancer. Beginning in the late 1950s, the study followed almost 13,000 men from seven different countries (Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Netherlands, Finland, United States, and Japan). Men living in the Mediterranean region had the lowest incidence of heart disease and

the longest life expectancy. And Greek men had a 90% lower likelihood of premature death from heart attack compared to American men!

The Lyon Diet Heart Study

This study compared a Mediterranean diet to a control diet resembling the American Heart Association Step 1 diet in heart attack survivors, and found that, compared to the American Heart Association Step 1 diet, the Mediterranean diet afforded significantly better protection against recurrent heart attacks and death. The Mediterranean diet was associated with a 70% decreased risk of death and a 73% decreased risk of recurrent cardiac events.

The DART Study

This study of over 2,000 men who had suffered heart attacks tested the hypothesis that fatty fish such as salmon and tuna, rich in omega-3 fatty acids, are protective against coronary heart disease. The results demonstrated that a modest intake of fatty fish twice per week (around 300 grams per week) reduced the risk of coronary heart disease death by 32% and overall death by 29%.

The Singh Indo-Mediterranean Diet Study

This study placed 499 patients with risk factors for coronary heart disease on an Indo-Mediterranean diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, walnuts, and almonds. The study found that the diet change resulted in a reduction in serum cholesterol and was associated with a significant reduction in heart attack and sudden cardiac death. Subjects were also found to have fewer cardiovascular events than those on a conventional diet.

The Alzheimer's Disease Study

This study by Dr. Nikolaos Scarmeas and colleagues from Columbia University Medical Center in New York demonstrated that a Mediterranean diet reduced the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by 68%. Another study from this same group showed that patients with Alzheimer's disease who followed a Mediterranean diet had reduced mortality.

The Metabolic Syndrome Study

This study by Dr. Katherine Esposito and colleagues from Italy evaluated the effects of a Mediterranean diet on patients with metabolic syndrome (obesity, elevated blood sugar, elevated blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol profile, and markers of vascular inflammation). A Mediterranean diet was shown to improve all of the components of the metabolic syndrome.

Why does the Mediterranean diet lower the risk of death from heart disease and cancer compared to an American or Western diet? There are many theories. Scientific studies have linked the intake of saturated fat and trans fat to the development of heart disease and other diseases, including cancer. The consumption of saturated fat is limited in the Mediterranean diet, and trans fats are not present. This is in stark contrast with the typical Western or American diet, which contains an excessive amount of saturated fat and trans fat. Many of the foods present in the Mediterranean diet have been shown to decrease inflammation, and current research has demonstrated the pivotal role that inflammation plays in the development and progression of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and an increasing list of other diseases. In contrast, the typical American (Western) diet, with its high levels of saturated fat, trans fat, and omega-6 fat, promotes inflammation and increases the incidence of heart disease and a multitude of other diseases initiated and aggravated by a state of chronic inflammation.

Whatever the reasons, I have witnessed the diet's success over and over again in my Miami cardiovascular disease prevention practice. And by adapting the traditional Mediterranean diet to our modern lifestyle, I have created a delicious and easy diet for long-term health.

How has the traditional Mediterranean diet been adapted? Nutritional science has introduced new and exciting ways to cook and prepare food. For instance, newly developed non-hydrogenated buttery spreads are a great, healthier replacement for butter or margarine in cooking and baking (they contain no trans fats and support heart health by providing omega-3 fat and plant sterols). Another example is the introduction of pomegranate juice, which has recently been shown to lower blood pressure and help reverse the build-up of fatty deposits (atherosclerosis) in our arteries. Nevertheless, the basics of a traditional Mediterranean diet remain unchanged: a wide variety of fresh whole non-processed foods, frequently enjoyed with a glass of wine in a relaxed setting with family and friends.

Let's take a look at the main components of the Mediterranean diet and their chief health benefits.

Whole grains

Whole (non-refined) grains are an integral part of the Mediterranean diet, and have been shown to decrease the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. A whole grain kernel consists of an outer layer, the bran (fiber); a middle layer (complex carbohydrates and protein); and an inner layer (vitamins, minerals, and protein). The process of refining, common outside the Mediterranean region, destroys the outer and inner layer of the grain, resulting in grains that lack fiber and disease-fighting

vitamins and phytochemicals. Examples of whole grains that are common to the Mediterranean diet are oatmeal, kasha, quinoa, and barley.

Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Go to any market in the Mediterranean basin and you will find a bountiful supply of fresh, native fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables contain an abundance of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and complex carbohydrates that lower the risk of heart disease and cancer. In particular, phytonutrients, concentrated in the skin of fruits and vegetables, are powerful plant-derived nutrients that help fight disease and improve our health. It is recommended that we eat a wide variety of colors (oranges, blueberries, red apples, spinach, yellow squash, etc.) in order to get all the nutritional benefits that fruits and vegetables can provide.

Nuts

Nuts, like olive oil, have been an essential part of the Mediterranean diet since antiquity. Nuts such as almonds and walnuts are rich in monounsaturated fat and omega-3 fatty acids, as well as good sources of protein, fiber, and vitamins. Nuts are an excellent snack that can assist with weight loss thanks to their high satiety. Several clinical trials have demonstrated that regular nut consumption leads to lower cholesterol, lower risk of coronary heart disease, and a significant reduction in the risk of heart attack.

Beans (Legumes)

Beans are also consumed on a regular basis in the Mediterranean region, and are a rich source of soluble and insoluble fiber, which help curb appetite and reduce cholesterol. In addition, beans are an excellent source of protein and vitamins. Regular bean consumption lowers the risk of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

Fish

Oily fish, prevalent in the Mediterranean diet, provide us with a rich source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids have a favorable impact on cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and reduce the risk of heart attack. They also help to reduce inflammation and, with regular consumption, decrease the risk of sudden death due to fatal cardiac arrhythmias.

A warning: Several species of fish may contain high levels of mercury and other contaminants, so pregnant women and young children should exercise caution. Nevertheless, for most adults, the cardiovascular benefits of fish consumption outweigh the risks, especially if you choose fish varieties that provide the highest

amount of omega-3 fatty acids and tend to contain the lowest amount of mercury. The best choices are salmon, albacore tuna, herring, sardines, shad, trout, flounder, and pollock. Avoid tilefish, swordfish, shark, and king mackerel, as these fish species tend to have the highest mercury content.

Olive Oil

Olive oil, made by crushing and then pressing olives, is the “soul” of the Mediterranean diet, and provides the taste and flavor that is so much a part of Mediterranean dishes. It is rich in monounsaturated fat—the type of fat which is beneficial for heart health.

The regular use of olive oil instead of butter or margarine is associated with a reduced risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and inflammatory disorders like asthma and arthritis. Olive oil also has a favorable impact on cholesterol. Besides decreasing total cholesterol, it also lowers bad (LDL) cholesterol, and makes our bodies less susceptible to oxidative damage by free radicals. Olive oil also helps maintain or increase good (HDL) cholesterol, so the total cholesterol to HDL cholesterol ratio (an important key to cholesterol health) is improved.

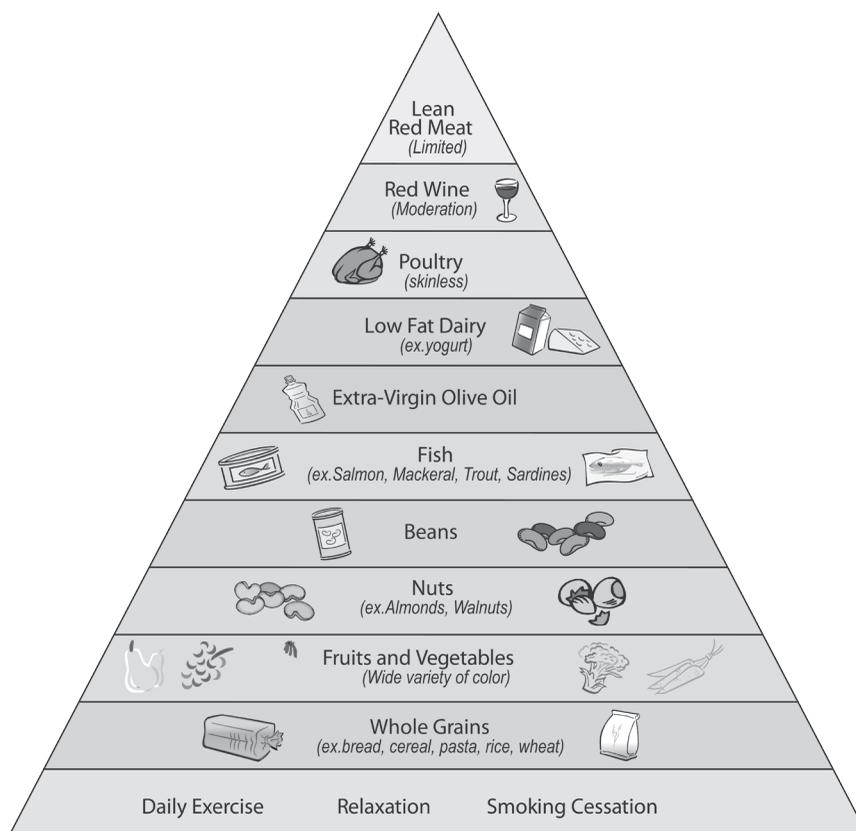
In addition, olive oil can help you lose weight. A study in Boston showed that a diet which included olive oil and nuts resulted in sustained weight loss over eighteen months compared to a low-fat diet. People also stayed on the diet longer because they did not feel deprived.

Red Wine

Moderate alcohol consumption has been shown to lower the risk of coronary heart disease, and red wine, often part of a Mediterranean meal, is believed to have several advantages over other forms of alcohol. Red wine contains polyphenols and resveratrol, two substances that help to promote heart health. Resveratrol, a powerful antioxidant, is more abundant in red wine than white wine; it lowers the bad (LDL) cholesterol and raises the good (HDL) cholesterol, and also has a beneficial impact on clotting.

Remember, alcohol should be consumed in moderation: wine consumption should not exceed one to two (5-ounce) glasses per day. For those individuals who do not wish to consume wine, grape juice is an excellent alternative: grape juice—specifically purple grape juice—also lowers the risk of heart attack. Since most heart attacks occur in the morning, many patients with cardiovascular risk factors often have a small glass of purple grape juice with breakfast.

The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



The Mediterranean Lifestyle

You'll notice that, in the anecdote I used to open the book, Giovanni's day differed from Ted's in more than just diet. The pace of Giovanni's day was more relaxed—yet more active!—with more room for enjoyment. It is important not just what you eat, but the circumstances in which you eat it, and the way you live between meals!

Stress: The Silent Killer

People living in Mediterranean countries tend to have less stress in their daily lives compared to their American counterparts. They spend more time enjoying their meals with family and friends. They often relax and take a short nap after lunch. A recent study showed that a regular midday nap reduced the risk of death from heart disease by 37%!

Often, doctors don't discuss the deleterious impact of chronic stress on long-term health with patients during routine office visits. This does not mean that stress is not an important risk factor—indeed, it may be the most important! The problem with stress is that it cannot be measured the way cholesterol or blood pressure can. In addition, what causes stress for one person may not cause stress for another. I am reminded of a story I once heard about two matadors from Spain. Pepe and Poncho were having lunch before a bullfight. Pepe said, “Poncho, isn't this great? I love bullfighting. I live to enter the stadium and fight the bull in front of all those people.” Poncho replied, “That's great, Pepe, but I hate what I do for a living—I have constant nightmares of been gored by the bull, and my stomach is tied up in knots for days before each fight.” Here are two men in the same profession with completely opposite views regarding the stress it causes.

Chronic stress increases stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline, which in turn increase blood pressure, cause the heartbeat to become rapid, and increase the likelihood of forming blood clots. Studies have shown that chronic stress significantly increases the risk of heart attack. To make matters worse, those individuals who are “hot reactors”—who have a short fuse, are impatient, and have a high hostility index—are especially prone to cardiovascular calamities.

What, then, is the treatment for stress? First, let's be realistic—we all have periods of stress in our lives. Some of us, unfortunately, have more stress than others. Regardless, the first step in handling stress is to take a realistic view of the factors responsible for stress in our lives and try our best to modify them. Next, I recommend a physical exercise program—not because exercise eliminates stress, but rather because people who exercise are better able to handle stress. There is a physiological explanation for the beneficial effects of exercise on stress: people who engage in regular aerobic exercise have lower catecholamine levels—in other words, their adrenaline levels are lower and rise less dramatically with stressful situations. In addition to a regular exercise program, I encourage my patients to begin relaxation response training, yoga, self-hypnosis, or meditation. Finally, prayer offers significant stress reduction for some individuals. If these lifestyle changes do not result in a significant reduction in stress, then a consultation with a psychologist or psychiatrist may be appropriate.

10 Steps for Stress Reduction

- Exercise daily
- Meditate
- Pray
- Enjoy a close relationship with family and friends

- Set realistic goals in life
 - Live within your means
 - Try yoga
 - Enjoy hobbies and interests outside of your work
 - Have a positive outlook on life and never lose your sense of humor
 - Laugh, smile, and enjoy your life!
-

Exercise Daily—Your Heart Will Thank You

Daily exercise is an integral part of the Mediterranean lifestyle, and it does more than just help you handle stress. Whether it's walking to the market or working in the garden, regular daily exercise is essential for good health. Exercise raises good (HDL) cholesterol, lowers blood pressure, and optimizes bone health, reducing the risk of osteoporosis. Regular exercise also provides a sense of well-being. Physical inactivity, along with poor dietary habits, has led to an epidemic of obesity in America. And several studies have shown that being unfit is even more deleterious to our health than being overweight. Unfortunately, we have become a nation of "couch potatoes." Getting people to exercise is difficult. We use the elevator instead of stairs; we ride in golf carts instead of walking; we park as close as possible to the store in order to walk the fewest number of steps.

The solution is to incorporate exercise into our daily activities. Exercise does not necessarily mean jogging five miles a day; simply walking for thirty minutes a day has been shown to decrease the risk of heart attack and cardiovascular death. The benefits of regular aerobic exercise are significant. Besides the benefits listed above, a regular exercise program will also reduce fatigue and improve lung function. And adding resistance training with light weights can improve bone health further and help maintain muscle tone.

5 Easy Exercise Tips

- Walk in place for thirty minutes while watching your favorite TV show—get off the couch!
 - Park farther away from your destination (office, store, etc.) and enjoy a short walk
 - Climb stairs instead of using the elevator
 - Walk for the initial part of your lunch break, before eating lunch
 - Use a pedometer—strive for 10,000 steps per day
-

The Ten Commandments of the Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle

1. Eat a wide variety of fresh, non-processed food
2. Avoid saturated fat, trans fat, refined sugar, and excess sodium
3. Substitute olive oil or trans fat–free vegetable spreads for margarine or butter
4. Limit portion size
5. Drink an adequate amount of water
6. If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation
7. Exercise daily (minimum thirty minutes per day)
8. Abstain from smoking
9. Relax (especially after meals)
10. Never lose your sense of humor—laugh, smile, and enjoy life!



Thanks for checking out this preview of

The Complete Mediterranean Diet

Everything You Need to Know to *Lose Weight*
and *Lower Your Risk* of Heart Disease

By: Michael Ozner, MD

Connect with the Author:

DrOzner.com

Pre-Order Your Copy Today!

