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# Mediterranean Diet May Help Prevent Death After Heart Disease



**Alice G. Walton,** CONTRIBUTOR

I cover health, medicine, psychology and neuroscience. [FULL BIO](#) ▾

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The rock star of all diets, the Mediterranean diet has been linked to a lower risk of everything from diabetes to dementia. It's famously good for the heart—people who stick to a Mediterranean diet over the years have markedly lower risk of heart disease than non-partakers. But a new study now also shows that for people who already have heart disease, eating a Mediterranean diet lowers the risk of mortality in the years to come. And, as [some](#) have suggested, the benefit that comes from the diet may be even greater than that from one of the most common heart treatments—statins.

As Author Giovanni de Gaetano said in a statement, "Many scientific studies have shown that a traditional Mediterranean lifestyle is associated with a lower risk of various chronic diseases and, more

"ORIGINALE ED ELEGANTE"  
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RICHIEDI PREVENTIVO



use. But  
the general  
posed of

healthy people. What happens to people who have already suffered from cardiovascular disease? Is the Mediterranean diet optimal for them too?"



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To answer this question, he and his team looked at data from a long-term study called the Moli-sani project, which included 25,000 people living in the Italian region of Molise. Just under 1,200 of the participants had heart disease going in. In the food arena, people answered questions that allowed the researchers to determine how closely (or not) they followed a Mediterranean diet, which generally includes a lot of vegetables, fruits, fish, whole grains, nuts and olive oil. It's lower in dairy, meat and sweets, but usually includes a little wine.

In the seven-year study period, there were 208 deaths.

It turned out that for each two-point jump in a person's Mediterranean diet score, there was an associated 21% reduced risk of dying over the course of those seven years. And the researchers broke it down another way: They divided participants into thirds, according to how



ranean  
highest-  
risk of

mortality than those in the lowest. These results were true after the team controlled for confounding variables like age, sex, calorie intake, blood pressure, cholesterol level, egg and potato intake, exercise, waist-to-hip ratio, smoking status and having other health problems when the study started.

They also looked at the individual foods that were linked to a reduced risk of death. “The major contributors to mortality risk reduction were a higher consumption of vegetables, fish, fruits, nuts and monounsaturated fatty acids—that means olive oil,” said Bonaccio.



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There are of course both strengths and weaknesses to the study. One of the former is that it was prospective study, meaning that it followed people over time, asking them to report on their diets and other lifestyle habits moving forward, rather than asking them to recount this information from memory, which is always risky. But a drawback is that it may not have been long enough or large enough to draw reliable conclusions. It's also not been published in a peer-review



considered preliminary.

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