

Health, Food and Sports

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Received: November 27, 2021; **Published:** February 28, 2022

World Health Organization (WHO) defines Health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not only the absence of diseases or illnesses”. It also indicates that the enjoyment of the maximum degree of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without of race, religion, political ideology or economic or social condition.

Well-being, health, and quality of life are faithfully united. This concept of quality of life began to be used from 60s. It defines as the correlation between a certain target standard or living, of a given population group, and the subjective assessment (satisfaction, well-being).

Within this term of quality of life, we found different aspects of life as health, the physical function, the psychosocial adaptation, the satisfaction in life, the well-being, and the happiness. All of them are factors that influence our life and condition out diet and habits.

Why Mediterranean diet?

Round the year 2013 when the Mediterranean diet enters the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, a proposal submitted by Spain, Greece, Italy and Morocco.

Mediterranean diet is a set of knowledge, practical skills, rituals, traditions and symbols related to agricultural crops, fishing, and animal husbandry, as well as how to preserve, transform, cook, share, and consume food. The act of eating together is one of the foundations of the cultural identity and continuity of the Mediterranean Sea environment. Therefore, Mediterranean diet it's not just eating, is social Exchange, interacting with family, Friends, colleagues. This intangible cultural heritage highlights the values of hospitality, good neighbourliness, intercultural dialogue, and creativity, all against a background of respect for diversity.

Also, Mediterranean diet plays a fundamental role in social cohesion in cultural spaces, festivities and celebrations since people of all ages, conditions and social classes meet. Everything is celebrated eating.

Mediterranean diet...

- Is a philosophy of life because the way of eating, cooking food, sharing it, enjoying the environment and the landscape, living, and relating to the environment, art, culture, history, and traditions linked to food and its origin.
- Is the centre of the intercultural relations of the communities that make up Mediterranean territory, it is the common element and essential part of the intangible cultural heritage.
- Is a lifestyle common to all the peoples of the Mediterranean territory. The landscapes, the crops, the market, the celebrations, the gatherings, the life in the open air... The Mediterranean do not sit at the table to eat, but to be together and to enjoy the company.

The nutritional model of this Mediterranean diet is based on olive oil, cereals, fruits and vegetables, a moderate proportion of meat, fish and dairy products, and abundant condiments and spices, whose consumption at the table is accompanied by wine or infusions, always respecting the beliefs of each community. It is a form of healthy and sustainable eating that arises from the resources of the environment (wheat, olive and vine), a rich, varied and especially satisfactory diet.

Mediterranean diet, whose name comes from the Greek word “*diata*” (way of life), combines eating with social interaction, since common food is the cornerstone of social customs and the celebration of festive events.

But Mediterranean diet is something more. There are many sayings, stories, and legends, but what is guaranteed is respect for the land and biodiversity, conservation, and the development of traditional and artisan activities.

However, Mediterranean diet is under threat. The influence of globalization and sociocultural changes bring new customs and less healthy eating habits, alien to this culture.

The progressive abandonment of Mediterranean diet is having consequences on health and its disappearance leads to a lower consumption of Mediterranean products that leads to a decrease in production, the abandonment of rural territories and the degradation of the country.

What is the relationship between Mediterranean diet and health?

Proper nutrition is vital for a strong immune system. Food not only provides calories and flavour but is also the input for our body's nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. It is essential to give the body the nutrients it needs, regularly and in abundance, so that are so important in the fight against viruses. An optimal diet is essential in health crisis because it is the healthiest diet par excellence and the one that provides the most nutrients.

Decalogue of Mediterranean diet

1. Use extra virgin oil EVOO, avoid fats such as butter or margarine.
2. Take fruit, vegetables, and greens. They are the main source of minerals, vitamins and fiber in addition to providing a large amount of water to the body. You should take around five daily servings of these foods.
3. Consume derivatives of cereals: Bread, pasta, rice... one intake a day is enough to provide the necessary carbohydrates. The consumption of the integral versions is recommended.
4. Avoid consuming processed food. Food must be fresh and seasonal, being consumed at its best, both for its nutrients (they have more properties), and for its aroma, texture, and flavour, making the mealtime more enriching.
5. Daily consumption of dairy products (yogurt, cheese), as they are rich in calcium and help the intestinal flora since they are basis of probiotics.
6. Consume protein every day. The protein par excellence is fish. It should be taken 3 to 4 times a week.
7. Consumption of meat and eggs, 2 or 3 times a week. A very interesting animal protein too, in the egg. As for meat, White meat such as chicken, turkey or rabbit is preferable. Red meat should be eaten in moderation, for example, as part of stews or with vegetables. Meat processed, such as sausages and derivatives, should be avoided.

8. Avoid sweets and cakes. Fruit is a good alternative for dessert, mid-morning, and snacks. Fruit brings colour and flavour to the food and at the same time keeps us healthy.
9. Drink water, the best drink. It is the Mediterranean drink par excellence. And to protect immunity, avoid alcohol and tobacco.
10. Practice physical exercise.

How does physical activity influence our life?

Numerous studies reveal that physical activity is crucial for health. Reducing sedentary lifestyle is the key to good habits, starting with the incorporation of physical activity to include movement in our daily lives.

There are three important definitions:

- Sport: Physical activity carried out regularly, under a program called training, which is governed by rules established by the sport itself and which is aimed at competition.
- Exercise: It is a more specific term that implies the realization of physical activity in a more specific way (aerobic exercise, strength exercise, flexibility exercise).
- Physical activity: Is any body movement associated with muscle contraction that increases energy expenditure above resting levels.

Today, with so many advances and facilities, we have all kinds of temptations (cars, elevators, escalators) that encourage us to move less and less.

When we talk about activity, the physical benefits that it brings to the body come to mind, a better state of shape, greater strength, resistance, but...what about mental health? Exercise is closely related to mental health, in fact, it is essential. Physical activity has epidemiologically demonstrated benefits in the improvement of symptoms of depression and can attenuate the cognitive decline that occurs with age, in addition, it intervenes in the improvement of stress and the control anxiety.

Returning to the initial definition of health, being healthy is not only the absence of diseases in the body, but also a physical, mental, and social balance in which food, physical activity, social relationships, culture, environment interact.

From the father of medicine, Hippocrates, “may food be your medicine and may your medicine be your food”.

Volume 17 Issue 3 March 2022

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