



Go Mediterranean

More proof that a diet rich in olive oil and fish can ward off heart disease



A MEDITERRANEAN DIET high in olive oil, nuts, fish and fresh fruits and vegetables may help prevent heart disease and strokes, according to a large study from Spain.

Past research suggested people who eat this type of diet have healthier hearts, but those studies couldn't rule out that other health or lifestyle differences had made the difference.

But for the new trial, written up in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers randomly assigned study volunteers at risk of heart disease to a Mediterranean or standard low-fat diet for five years, allowing the team to single out the effect of diet in particular.

"This is good news, because we know how to prevent the main cause of deaths - that is cardiovascular diseases - with a good diet," said Miguel Angel Martinez-Gonzalez, who worked on the study at the Universidad de Navarra in Pamplona.

He and colleagues from across Spain assigned almost 7,500 older adults with diabetes or other heart risks to one of three groups.

Two groups were instructed to eat a Mediterranean diet - one supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil and the other with nuts, both donated for the study - with help from personalised advice and group meetings. The third study group ate a "control" diet, which emphasised low-fat dairy products, grains and fruits and vegetables.

People on both Mediterranean diets were 28 to 30 per cent less likely to develop cardiovascular disease than those on the general low-fat diet, the researchers said.

The new study is the first randomised trial of any diet pattern to show benefit among people initially without heart disease, said Dariush Mozaffarian, who studies nutrition and cardiovascular disease at the Harvard School of Public Health.

It's the blend of Mediterranean diet components, and not one particular ingredient, that promotes heart health, according to Martinez-Gonzalez.

"The quality of fat in the Mediterranean diet is very good," he said. "This good

source of calories is replacing other bad sources of calories. In addition, there is a wide variety of plant foods in the Mediterranean diet," he added, including legumes and fruits as desserts.

He suggested that people seeking to improve their diet start with small changes, such as forgoing meat one or two days a week and cooking with olive oil.

Replacing a high-carbohydrate or high-saturated fat snack with a handful of nuts is also a helpful change, experts said. *Reuters*

Help others, help yourself



VOLUNTEERING CAN HELP develop a healthier cardiovascular system and stave off cardiac disease in as little as 10 weeks, says a US study.

The research bolsters the evidence that devoting time and energy to a cause not only makes people feel good, it also impacts physical wellbeing positively.

Hannah Schreier, from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York led the study looking at the effect of volunteering on adolescents' physical health while working at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, the *Journal of American Medical Association Paediatrics* reports.

The study involved 106 teenagers from an urban, inner-city Vancouver high school who were split into two

groups, a group that volunteered regularly for 10 weeks and a group that was wait-listed for volunteer activities, according to the *Daily Mail*.

Researchers measured the students' body mass index (BMI), inflammation levels which affect heart's health and cholesterol scores before and after the study. The volunteer group of students spent one hour per week working with elementary school children in after-school programmes in their neighbourhood.

After 10 weeks they had lower levels of inflammation and cholesterol and lower (body mass index) BMIs than the students who were wait-listed.

Schreier said: "It was encouraging to see how a social intervention to support members of the community also improved the health of adolescents." *IANS*

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Feng Shui For Children

FENG SHUI is the ancient science of energy management. The main aim is to balance your immediate environment to restore harmony. If implemented correctly, Feng Shui has a huge positive impact on your health, wealth and happiness. Arrangements of objects like plants, water fountains, wind chimes, mirrors and furniture when based on principles of Feng Shui, bring positive energy into a room. Implementing a Feng Shui friendly layout will increase harmony and bring about positive changes in your life.

You need wisdom, prosperity, and definitely good health for children to prosper and grow. Feng Shui and children go hand in hand as they need encouragement in all aspects of life. It is a benefit to young minds and hearts to start out life with a healthy dose of balance and harmony. Parents have found success with Feng Shui in aiding their children with sleeping issues, health concerns, and educational obstacles. Arranging their homes, study rooms and bedrooms to reflect the ancient philosophy is a good start to a well-balanced life.

The layout of the study room should support the child in studies and encourage growth. It is very important to place the study desk away from the door or window to avoid being hit by a line of energy and to avoid distractions. Place the chair in such a way it has solid wall support, so that the child feels secure. Avoid placing any water fountain, aquarium or large electronic items in the study room, as they activate fire and water energy in the room, which will lead to disruptive behaviour and distractions. Display happy pictures in the study room. Avoid images or paintings that depict sadness and create heavy energy. Keep the study room devoid of clutter. Children's bedrooms also need to be designed with Feng Shui principles to enhance creativity and focus. The bed should never be placed on the wall of the toilet or below a window, as it will encourage bad dreams and poor health. One wall can be painted in a bright colour; however, the other walls can be painted in lighter shades to lighten up the energy. Get your children to clear clutter on a regular basis so that they understand the importance of Feng Shui and actively participate. Do not place a television or mirror directly opposite the bed to avoid sleep disruptions. Display all favourite toys and objects so that the child is always surrounded by good memories and energy.

In short by creating a Feng Shui friendly bedroom and study room, you will be creating a well balanced environment for your child to grow and flourish.

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