Mediterranean Diet Facts

**Why should I follow the Mediterranean diet?**
Research has shown that people who eat a Mediterranean diet have lower rates of heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, obesity, Alzheimer’s disease as well as lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

**What is the Mediterranean diet?**
The Mediterranean diet is a plant-based diet, with 15 percent of calories from protein and approximately 30 to 35 percent of calories from healthy monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fat. The remainder of calories comes from unprocessed, fiber-rich foods, including fruits and vegetables of all kinds, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.

**What foods should I eat when following the Mediterranean diet?**
The ideal Mediterranean diet has high quantities of vegetables, fruit, legumes and whole grains; moderate quantities of fish, white meats, nuts, low-fat dairy, produce and wine; and low quantities of red meat, eggs and sweets. Herbs are used for flavoring in place of salt.

**What about foods containing fat?**
The traditional Mediterranean diet plan includes foods high in monounsaturated fat, such as fish, olives, olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds. This is why portion size is important in order to prevent weight gain.

**What are some ways I can start using the Mediterranean Diet?**
Change gradually:
- Add vegetables to each meal.
- Have fruits at every meal.
- Use olive oil in cooking.
- Stock the pantry with legumes; beans; whole grain breads, cereals and crackers; dried fruit; olive oil; olives; and nuts.
- Stock the refrigerator with vegetables, fruit, low-fat cheese and yogurt, hummus, eggs, poultry and fish.

Keeps snacks simple:
- Top pita bread with a slice of tomato and a few tablespoons of grated cheese.
- Enjoy air-popped popcorn tossed with olive oil and Parmesan cheese.
- Fruit: eat an apple or an orange, or have a peach with cottage cheese or a few apple slices with peanut butter.
- Fill celery stalks with hummus or nut butter.