

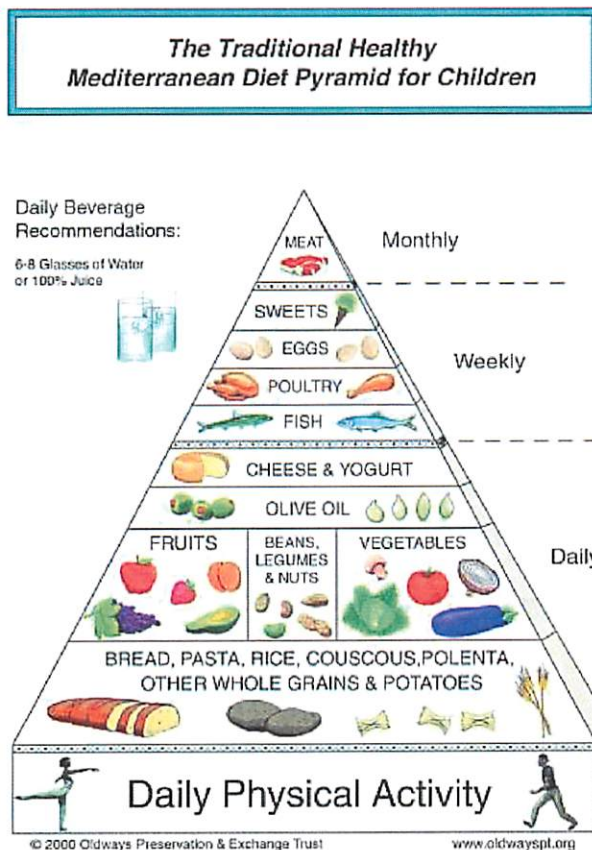


## Mediterranean Diet for Kids

The Mediterranean diet places an emphasis on whole grains, nuts, beans, fruits, vegetables and olive oil while fish, dairy foods and eggs are eaten in moderation. Red meat is rarely consumed. The benefits of this eating style for children are ones that carry over throughout their life if they continue to follow it. The Mediterranean diet is a lifestyle that is conducive to good health for kids now and as they grow up.

### **Mediterranean Diet Pyramid**

The traditional Food Guide Pyramid was altered to include the specific foods that make up the Mediterranean diet and then changed yet again to make it appropriate for children who are eating in such a way. According to the Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust, the bottom of the pyramid includes a healthy amount of physical activity, which children need to grow and stay healthy. It then moves up from there with the foods eaten in the largest amounts up to foods that are eaten sparingly or not at all. The most servings a child will eat on the Mediterranean diet daily are from the grain group, then plant foods, next up is olive oil followed by cheese and yogurt. Groups consumed weekly include eggs, meat and sweets, while red meat is consumed only once a month or less.





**KJARTAN D. ARMANN, M.D.**  
Infant, Child and Adolescent Medicine

2516 Samaritan Dr., Suite J  
San Jose, CA 95124  
Phone: (408) 356-0578  
Fax: (408) 353-986  
[www.kjkidmd.com](http://www.kjkidmd.com)

---

## **Foods**

Children should be eating a variety of foods from all of the food groups on the Mediterranean diet to cover their nutrient needs each day. The foods that make up a large part of the diet include fruits, vegetables, nuts and grains. This includes pasta, rice, potatoes and polenta as well as almonds, pistachios, cashews, walnuts and peanut butter. A variety of fruits and vegetables should be eaten to get adequate nutrients from your diet. Fish, such as trout, mackerel and salmon, and poultry are meats that are consumed weekly by children on the Mediterranean diet as well as moderate intake of eggs and sweet treats. Yogurt and cheese should be low-fat versions, and butter should be replaced with olive oil.

## **Considerations**

It is important to remember that any healthy lifestyle should include a healthy dose of exercise each day, and the Mediterranean diet makes this clear by making it the base of the pyramid. In addition using spices and herbs instead of salt is an important component of the Mediterranean diet. It may take some time to get children used to stronger flavors, but perseverance is the key. Wine is also advocated on the Mediterranean diet, but purple grape juice is an alternative to red wine and is something that children can drink until they reach the legal drinking age of 21.

## **Benefits**

Following the Mediterranean style of eating has been linked with a reduction in heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. While these are not traditional childhood diseases, getting kids started on a healthy diet will protect their health in the future as well as giving them the tools necessary to make healthy choices on their own. In addition, a diet high in fruits and vegetables encourages children to stay at a healthy weight. Limiting meat and dairy foods cuts a child's intake of saturated fat. Always consult with your child's doctor before beginning any new eating plan, the Mediterranean diet included.

## **Kid's Recipe's**

[www.superhealthykids.com](http://www.superhealthykids.com)



## Tips for Families

The Mediterranean Diet is all about delicious foods, flavors, textures and colors, with something for everyone – even finicky eaters! Keep these tips in mind as you shop for your family.

- Plan meals in advance. Make a shopping list and buy most of what you need in one trip to the store per week. Build up your pantry to keep Mediterranean ingredients such as olive oil, canned tomatoes, whole grains, pasta, and tuna on hand. Buy additional fresh produce and seafood a few times a week.
- Be prepared when hunger strikes. When kids need an after-school snack, offer up small bowls of Mediterranean dips like hummus, tzatziki, baba ghanouj, and spicy muhammara. Pair the dips with an ever changing variety of fresh vegetables, or offer whole grain pita bread for dipping.
- Follow the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid and encourage your kids to eat vegetables every day. Add veggies to the foods your kids already like. If pancakes are popular, add some grated carrots, or shredded zucchini to the batter. Toss frozen peas and corn with pasta or mac and cheese. Or, add diced sautéed onions, peppers and feta to scrambled eggs.
- The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid recommends eating several pieces of fruit each day. Make fruit a part of your family's daily diet. Dice up apples and strawberries or toss a few blueberries into the morning meal. If your child is looking for a savory snack, offer up black or green olives as nutritious option. Stock up on clementines, grapes, pears, and melon for after school munching. Encourage kids to eat fresh fruit rather than drinking fruit juice for a better source of fiber, which is often lacking in their diets.
- Mediterranean vegetables are very versatile, so experiment with different cooking methods. Kids often prefer a raw or roasted carrot to a steamed one. Eggplant that is sliced, brushed with olive oil and lightly browned on both sides under the broiler may have more appeal than when it is sautéed – and soft. Try serving potatoes as healthy, oven-baked fries rather than mashed with butter and cream.
- The Mediterranean Diet recommends eating fish twice a week. If you haven't been a fish-eating family, serve small helpings of mild-flavored mahi-mahi, cod, or tilapia and experiment with flavorful Mediterranean marinades using oregano, garlic, lemon juice and basil.
- If hamburgers are popular fare in your household, bring home several varieties of veggie burgers and ask your family to choose their favorite. Mediterranean wraps with spicy hummus or pitas stuffed with tabbouli and falafel may be big winners in your household - you just have to give them a try.
- Make your own trail mix. The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid recommends eating small amounts of nuts in order to benefit from their healthy proteins, fats, and fiber. In a large bowl, combine peanuts, chopped walnuts, almonds, raisins, dried cranberries or blueberries, and whole grain cereal. Package it in "snack-size" zip-lock bags to have on hand for car trips and lunch boxes.
- To get the family involved in preparing meals, take them around the world without leaving the kitchen - schedule theme nights such as "A Night in Tuscany" and make a hearty soup with beans and farro. Experiment with the different flavors of each region and get your kids excited about trying new dishes. AND let your kids help prepare the meals. If your children don't learn basic kitchen skills they'll regret it later in life and won't have a legacy to pass along to their children.
- The Mediterranean Diet is all about delicious foods, flavors, textures and colors, with something for everyone – even finicky eaters! Keep these tips in mind as you shop for your family.
- Plan meals in advance. Make a shopping list and buy most of what you need in one trip to the store per week. Build up your pantry to keep Mediterranean ingredients such as olive oil, canned tomatoes, whole grains, pasta, and tuna on hand. Buy additional fresh produce and seafood a few times a week.
- Be prepared when hunger strikes. When kids need an after-school snack, offer up small bowls of Mediterranean dips like hummus, tzatziki, baba ghanouj, and spicy muhammara. Pair the dips with an ever changing variety of fresh vegetables, or offer whole grain pita bread for dipping.



**KJARTAN D. ARMANN, M.D.**  
Infant, Child and Adolescent Medicine

2516 Samaritan Dr., Suite J  
San Jose, CA 95124  
Phone: (408) 356-0578  
Fax: (408) 353-986  
[www.kjkidmd.com](http://www.kjkidmd.com)

- 
- Follow the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid and encourage your kids to eat vegetables every day. Add veggies to the foods your kids already like. If pancakes are popular, add some grated carrots, or shredded zucchini to the batter. Toss frozen peas and corn with pasta or mac and cheese. Or, add diced sautéed onions, peppers and feta to scrambled eggs.
  - The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid recommends eating several pieces of fruit each day. Make fruit a part of your family's daily diet. Dice up apples and strawberries or toss a few blueberries into the morning meal. If your child is looking for a savory snack, offer up black or green olives as nutritious option. Stock up on clementines, grapes, pears, and melon for after school munching. Encourage kids to eat fresh fruit rather than drinking fruit juice for a better source of fiber, which is often lacking in their diets.
  - Mediterranean vegetables are very versatile, so experiment with different cooking methods. Kids often prefer a raw or roasted carrot to a steamed one. Eggplant that is sliced, brushed with olive oil and lightly browned on both sides under the broiler may have more appeal than when it is sautéed – and soft. Try serving potatoes as healthy, oven-baked fries rather than mashed with butter and cream.
  - The Mediterranean Diet recommends eating fish twice a week. If you haven't been a fish-eating family, serve small helpings of mild-flavored mahi-mahi, cod, or tilapia and experiment with flavorful Mediterranean marinades using oregano, garlic, lemon juice and basil.
  - If hamburgers are popular fare in your household, bring home several varieties of veggie burgers and ask your family to choose their favorite. Mediterranean wraps with spicy hummus or pitas stuffed with tabbouli and falafel may be big winners in your household - you just have to give them a try.
  - Make your own trail mix. The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid recommends eating small amounts of nuts in order to benefit from their healthy proteins, fats, and fiber. In a large bowl, combine peanuts, chopped walnuts, almonds, raisins, dried cranberries or blueberries, and whole grain cereal. Package it in "snack-size" zip-lock bags to have on hand for car trips and lunch boxes.
  - To get the family involved in preparing meals, take them around the world without leaving the kitchen - schedule theme nights such as "A Night in Tuscany" and make a hearty soup with beans and farro. Experiment with the different flavors of each region and get your kids excited about trying new dishes. AND let your kids help prepare the meals. If your children don't learn basic kitchen skills they'll regret it later in life and won't have a legacy to pass along to their children.