

Could a Mediterranean Diet Ease Your Health Woes?

According to recent analysis, it has been found that people coping with Type 2 diabetes show slower progression of the disease while adhering to the Mediterranean diet that comprises of fish, olive oil and whole grains, as compared to cutting down on the consumption of fat.

The trial conducted on diabetics for more than eight years concluded that people who followed the Mediterranean diet were found to wait longer before taking their medication. Also, many of these people went into remission from their diabetes, as compared to people who were on a low-fat diet.

According to Dr. Leanne Olansky, an endocrinologist at the Cleveland Clinic, there are many factors that determine the Mediterranean diet as being useful for people suffering from diabetes and metabolic syndrome. However, this trial was controlled and proved that it was the diet that was helping people manage Type 2 diabetes.

These types of trials are done to find the effectiveness of medicines for certain diseases. Olansky says that it is a common notion that fats are bad for your health; however, now it is clear that it depends on the kind of fat you are consuming.

Katherine Esposito, a researcher of diabetes at the Second University of Naples in Italy, says that people having diabetes should consider including healthy foods in their diet, and a Mediterranean diet is a nourishing alternative. It is essential to cut down the consumption of calories to maintain optimal health, and restricting the consumption of fats is a good way to keep a check on the amounts of calories you intake daily. However, it is also vital to ensure that you

are taking good amounts of healthy fats too.

Esposito says that one of the main features of the Mediterranean diet is the minimum percentage of fat that one should consume daily, and it is around 30 percent of your daily calories. According to the Mediterranean diet, the main fat should be strictly monosaturated and should come from olive oil.

What's the Study?

Esposito and her colleagues continue to examine people included in a previous study where participants who were diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes were divided into two groups. One group followed a Mediterranean diet and the other group followed a low-fat diet. Both diets were specifically created to keep the symptoms from getting worse and for maintaining optimal blood sugar level without the use of medicines for as long as possible.

Researchers ensured that women consumed only 1,500 calories and men consumed only 1,800 calories per day on both diets. The participants in the group who followed Mediterranean diet were allowed to eat an abundance of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Red meat was not allowed and was replaced by fish and poultry.

Nutritionists conducted monthly sessions with them and ensured that less than half of their calories were derived from carbohydrates and at least 30 percent from fat, specifically olive oil.

On the other hand, low-fat diet limits the consumption of fats and sugary snacks. Participants were allowed to consume only less than 30 percent of their daily calorie intake.

The Result

It was found that after a period of four years during the

study, most participants in each group still had not required medication for diabetes. After a period of six years during the study, mostly all the participants who were consuming a low-fat diet required medication. And finally, after eight years, all participants who were consuming the Mediterranean diet needed medication to control the disease.

The results published in *Diabetes Care* indicate that a condition termed as “diabetes remission,” where people have healthy blood sugar levels with no symptoms of diabetes, was seldom found in both groups. However, it was more common in participants who consumed Mediterranean diet as compared to those who were on low-fat diet.

Olansky says that restricting the consumption of saturated fat, particularly that found in red meat, is beneficial for diabetics. She further states that it is still not clear why the Mediterranean diet helps to control blood sugar level; however, many believe it is from the healthy sources of unsaturated fat and protein that comes from fish and olive oil, less red meat, and more amounts of fibrous diet.

Esposito says that the Mediterranean diet is an effective way to include healthy and tasty foods in your diet. Most of the participants continued to add Mediterranean foods in their diet even long after the study was completed.

Olansky states that people easily lost excessive weight while on the Mediterranean diet, as compared to a low-fat diet, since it is easy to follow. She further says that patients often ask about the changes they can make in their lifestyle and diet besides medication to fight diabetes. According to Olansky, suggesting lifestyle and diet modification to control disease is beneficial advice a doctor can give to his patients.

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