

Health and Nutrition

Language

English

MEDITERRANEAN DIET AND HEALTH

Ancel Keys (1904-2004) the North American physiologist and his international team of researchers established the medical and nutritional concept of the “Mediterranean Diet” in the 50’s of the 20th century.

Keys confirmed the importance for human health of the cholesterol levels in the blood, the active lifestyle, the eating model and socializing.

The “discovery” was more evident in the 50’s from the study “Seven Countries, a Multivariate Analysis of Death and Coronary Heart Disease” which developed a comparative analysis of the prevalence of the coronary and cardiovascular diseases in seven countries in the world (Japan, Finland, the Netherlands, USA, Yugoslavia, Italy and Greece), a sample of eating behaviours of 12,700 individuals between 40 and 59 years old.

A lower prevalence of heart diseases and longer longevity was reported in populations living in the Mediterranean basin who had a certain type of eating habits and kept social behaviours such as physical exercise resulting from walking and mostly agricultural works, intense family and community life.

Subsequent studies have confirmed Keys’ conclusions on the preventive factors for human health induced by the seasonal consumption of fresh products, vegetables and fruit, wine, olive oil, dry fruits aromatic plants and cereals. The excessive consumption of animal fat and very processed and little varied food, sedentariness and social isolation are the main causes for the “civilization diseases” and mental health disturbances.

The prevention of diabetes, CVA’s (strokes) and several types of cancer and the excellent results obtained with the Mediterranean food are part of a vast medical bibliography.

The World Health Organization recognised in the 90’s of the 20th century the Mediterranean Diet as a quintessential food model.

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