

Healthy Eating with Olive Oil

Adding olive oil to your diet — and cutting down on other, less healthy fats — can be part of a healthier way of eating. In fact, doctors and nutritionists commonly recommend olive oil as a component of a smart, well-balanced diet.

The adage, "you are what you eat" is especially accurate when it comes to what kinds of fat you eat. Too much of *any* fat (saturated fat from animals, polyunsaturated fat from nuts/seeds, or monounsaturated fat) is a problem, of course. But certain kinds of fat, particularly saturated and polyunsaturated, can contribute to health problems because they can raise cholesterol levels. Olive oil, a monounsaturated fat, does not increase cholesterol levels. In fact, a diet that includes olive oil in place of other oils has been clinically proven to *improve* cholesterol levels.

Did you know that roughly 1 in 3 Americans suffers from high blood pressure (HBP)? High blood pressure puts added strain on your heart and arteries, as well as other organs, increasing your risk of stroke, kidney problems and heart attacks, often without so much as a warning sign or symptom.

But there are some simple changes you can make to battle HBP, starting with choosing a diet low in sodium/salt, cholesterol, total fat and saturated fat. That's where Olive Oil comes in.

MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Many experts suggest that people looking for a better way to eat should try the "Mediterranean Diet," an endorsed part of the FDA's "Heart healthy" diet — and a delicious way to eat.

With no cholesterol or sodium, and a high amount of heart healthy fats — known as mono- and polyunsaturated fatty acids — Olive Oil makes taking better care of yourself an absolutely delicious pursuit. And now that summer is here, you can also take advantage of the health benefits of grilling some of your favorite meats, fruits and vegetables right in your own backyard.

Here are some more steps you can take to decrease your risk factors for HBP:

- Consume alcoholic beverages in moderation.
- Be physically active at least 30 minutes a day, most days of the week.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get your blood pressure checked by a medical professional regularly.
- If you have been diagnosed with HBP and prescribed medication, take it!

This article was written by Lindsey DeCaro, RD, LDN for Flippo Berio. This article is posted on The Olive and The Grape's website, with their permission.

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