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Welcome, everybody, thank you for joining me today for our presentation on the Mediterranean diet. So we're going to take a deep dive and I apologize again for not being there live. However, I will make sure all the resources are available and have a contact information at the end with some recipes suggestions as well as my email if

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you have any further questions. So my name is Christy Goff. I'm a registered dietitian with Pacific Medical Centers, and I run a program called the Living Well Alliance, and this program is a workplace wellness program that gets to do education for people like you that are looking for more nutrition knowledge.

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I also do individual counseling at the Lynwood, Northgate, Beacon Hill and Federal Way Clinics. So today I wanted to go over exactly what the Mediterranean diet is, how the Mediterranean diet can influence your health, with some research studies supporting that and then also finally getting started with this eating plan.

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How to implement this in your life? So the Mediterranean diet is a generic term based on a traditional eating habits of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. So it's not one specific diet. There are about 23 countries that fall into this category, including Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Lebanese, Turkey and then North African countries.

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So obviously, there's a lot of variance in these food cultures. However, there is considerable overlap giving rise to that delicious and distinct flavors that we associate as Mediterranean. The Mediterranean style diet typically includes plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables you can see.

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The whole bottom of the pyramid here is basically that we also know that they do a lot of whole grains or minimally processed grains, so those are also included in that bottom bulk of the diet. Furthermore, we see them eating plant protein sources like beans and nuts and seeds.

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They utilize olive oil. So we'll talk a lot about olive oil today as their primary fat source and then dairy products. Eggs, fish and poultry are in the low to moderate amounts, so they're still getting these animal sources for specific nutrients, but they're not loading up on them as we see a lot of times in the American

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diet. Things that we reduce in the Mediterranean diet are things like red meat, sweets, processed goods, et cetera. So year after year, the US news ranks Mediterranean diet as the best diet because of this flexibility, because there are so many cultures that can fall into the Mediterranean diet, it gives a lot of options for flavors and different

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recipes that we can add into our daily routines. So the US news ranks Mediterranean diet as the best diet. Because of this, add adaptability and then creative license to make a variety of things taste good and also just not get sick of it.

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We also pointed out in this same study that ranked as the best diet that the Mediterranean diet is also really great because it helps to prevent chronic diseases and increase longevity, which will go over a lot today. So here are the specific definition of a Mediterranean diet.

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But I love this food pyramid because it really does show you the portion sizes, as well as including that socialization and exercise at the very bottom of the pyramid there. We'll talk a little bit about wine, but they are definitely avid wine drinkers.

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However, they are moderate alcohol users, so there is not a lot of alcohol abuse in these countries, and it's usually utilized as a social entity rather than more of an everyday staple. So as we saw, the traditional Mediterranean diet is high in specific macro and micro nutrients that offers us numerous health benefits.

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So these are just a list of some of the ones that have come up over and over again in the research, and we'll go over a couple in detail. But I just wanted to point out that brain health, heart health, they're very inter related to how we're utilizing our nutrition and lifestyle factors as well as diabetes prevention

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. We see some notes of cancer prevention in this diet. It can help in weight maintenance, improving autoimmune diseases because of the anti-inflammatory components. And then it also has been shown to improve fertility and lead to healthy babies as well.

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We know that there are tons of great things in a Mediterranean diet again, that will review today, but some of the ones that stand out are those mono unsaturated fatty acids which are found in olive oil. And then we got some antioxidants and some phytochemicals like carotenoids that can really support health as well.

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In general, the diets fat content is around 40% increase in about 30% in Italy. So it is a little bit higher than what we would traditionally think of as like a lower fat diet. However, the suspension to be really abundant and producing are having a sense of satiety after eating, so it's no keto.

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That's about 90 to 95% of your diet. But this is a little bit higher, I would say, than like a traditional American or heart health diet. We'll talk about the types of fat, because that's going to be very important, but just know that if we're eating in this my plate method where we're getting again, lots of fruits

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and vegetables, lean proteins or plant proteins, and then we have these whole unprocessed grains that can provide us a lot of nutrients as well. So let's start with brain health, and specifically, they've looked at the Mediterranean diet and relationship to dementia prevention.

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This is great because we see positive results over and over again for lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and just that under general umbrella term for dementia. Right. Any type of memory loss? And why is this?

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Well, there's certain components to the diet that again, are both anti-inflammatory and helpful for maintaining the brain structure and function. So specifically, the Mediterranean diet has been associated with reduced brain infarcts and possibly resistance to brain atrophy. So a lot of what we see in Alzheimer's disease is the actual brain shrinking due to numerous factors.

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But if we can prevent this with certain foods, even at the smallest level, that's going to be really supportive. In general, when we talk about brain health and the Mediterranean diet, we're thinking about our omega three fatty acids, so these are found in freshwater fish.

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Walnuts, some nuts and seeds like flax seeds or hemp seeds or chia seeds. And then they also have a lot of vitamin E, which is found in vegetable oils, nuts and seeds. And these are a powerful antioxidant that help can lower the risk for disease and inflammation in general.

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Also, I put on their phytonutrients, so these are found in dark, colorful vegetables and fruits. They also promote just extra bonus for anti-inflammatory behaviors. So if you think about a tomato, it's exposed to the hot sun. Sometimes pests, sometimes drought, sometimes over watering, and all of these things lead to a stronger resistance inside the tomato to allow

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it to survive. And when we eat that really organic and ripe tomato, we're actually getting some of the benefits from those phytochemicals that the tomato is building. So that's why we always harp on. Plant foods are so great because they're actually providing us with some of the resistance that they've developed over their lifespan.

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Also, I throw out antioxidants a lot, so these are components that can help combat cell stress and actually support the telomere length. So that's our measurement of longevity, essentially in each cell. So antioxidants can preserve this by maintaining that length, and we do see that a normal shortening as we get older.

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But there's really good research that shows that these types of foods can really support the longevity of your cells in the health of your cells in general. So one of the biggest things that they've come out with with as studying kind of the Mediterranean countries and how little incidents of dementia and Alzheimer's they have, they've created a

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different type of diet called the mind diet. So this is an acronym for a Mediterranean dash, which is a hypertension supportive diet intervention for neurodegenerative delay. No wonder why there's an acronym, right? So this mind diet

was created in about 2015, and it compiles specific components of the Mediterranean diet that are extremely helpful for brain health.

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So those are a lot of the fruits like berries. There's also the dark leafy greens, those powerful antioxidant rich greens. They also promote nuts and seeds, lower saturated fat protein products like fish and chicken. And then a low amount of dairy, sweets and high saturated fat products like your cheeses and butter.

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So I would encourage you to go check out that link below. It talks about the mind diet, and there's a lot of cookbooks around the mind diet, and it's been really prominent in the research around dementia because of how much it can help prevent cognitive decline.

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So, yeah, let me know if you have any specific questions about brain health, I have a couple of studies that I can share in the follow up resource page that go it goes over why the mind diet and the Mediterranean diet are so good for brain health.

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Heart health is another benefit for following the Mediterranean diet. The American Heart Association supports this diet because it aligns pretty perfectly with their healthy dietary eating pattern, again emphasizing those vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans and legumes. These are for the fiber content, as well as some of the nutrients we just talked about.

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It includes some low fat dairy products or just the limiting dairy products so that supportive with their recommendation, and it limits sugar sugary beverages. It's low in sodium, low in processed foods, and typically because of this low and refined carbohydrates, saturated fats or most extremely processed meats that we have here.

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one kind of review of the different facets, we have these three facts that are prevalent in our food supply. You might have heard me talk about before, but we have unsaturated fats, saturated fats and trans fats. The unsaturated are the heart health benefits.

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They also help the brain that we just saw, too. So this is what we want to consist of the majority of your intake of fats. These support your cholesterol levels by lowering the LDL, the bad cholesterol and increasing the good cholesterol, the HDL.

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So they're really powerhouses, which is why we have so much emphasis on the Virgin extra virgin olive oil that we see in the Mediterranean diet. There's some evidence that the olive oil help or can help remove excess cholesterol from the arteries and keep the blood vessels open and flexible things that are going to really support blood pressure

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and heart health in general. Secondly, we have the saturated fats again. We do need some saturated fats. However, too

much has been associated with an increase of your LDL cholesterol. That bad cholesterol, as well as increase of the HDL, also raises everything across the board.

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This one is almost more predictive of high cholesterol levels in your blood as opposed to eating actual cholesterol rich foods. So that's where the egg controversy comes into play, right? So eggs have a lot of cholesterol in the yolks.

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However, they're very low in saturated fat, so we find that those are not influencing our blood cholesterol levels as much as, say, the things we might eat with our eggs. So your bacon, your home fries, some of the butter that we're cooking with and that sort of thing.

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So keep that in mind. Eggs are really good source of protein, and they're low in saturated fat, which makes them a healthy alternative to some of the other breakfast meats out there, essentially. And then the last one on the page as trans fats, this is found in some products that we developed.

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Basically, it's helping the food stay shelf stable, essentially. We know that this one is very linked to heart disease risk, so it drastically increases your LDL cholesterol and your HDL cholesterol as well gets lowered from this type of fat.

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So there is a lot of evidence that even just a little bit of trans fats consistently in the diet has been shown to lead to things like cardiovascular disease type two diabetes. So we just want to avoid this as much as possible.

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The recommendation is less than two grams a day, and I would say trying to get to zero is a good goal in mind. There is definitely some recommendations around how much fats we need, especially with the American Heart Association.

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So those are listed on your screen as well. So saturated, we want seven to 10% of our daily calorie intake that is about 20 grams of saturated fat or less, depending on how many calories you're eating a day.

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So that's based on a 2000 calorie diet and then unsaturated kind of fills in the rest so we can replace our butter with some olive oil. That's going to be a really good substitution because it's going to provide us fat satiety and some of the benefits that fat provides without all of the negative effects that saturated fat

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has on it. So I hope that clarifies some of the fat information out there. Again, we know that fats are a big topic for heart health, but also for brain health. So those omega three fatty acids are a type of unsaturated fats.

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So that's why we really encourage those in the diet and those are found in fish. And again, some of the seeds. one study

that looked at heart health and the Mediterranean diet followed almost 7500 adults that were high risk for cardiovascular disease, and they followed them for eight years.

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one group followed a strict Mediterranean diet supplemented with additional olive oil. And then the second group followed the Mediterranean diet without olive oil, so they did other types of fat. And then, of course, there is one more group that was the control that did a lower fat in general.

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So they weren't necessarily following that specific Mediterranean diet 42 or 30 to 40% of calories coming from fat. The results showed benefits of the Mediterranean diet, which include a 30% reduction in heart attack, stroke, cardiovascular death and a 40% reduction in type two diabetes, a 68% relative reduction in our peripheral artery disease and a 38% relative reduction

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in AFib. Essentially, they even saw some reduction in breast cancer risk from those following the Mediterranean diet that were specifically supplementing with the olive oil. So a lot of reduction more than medication can provide, honestly. So this is things that you could potentially work on in your own life to make sure you're getting the right types of

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fat and following those cholesterol labs that can indicate health risk in the future. All right, so lastly, I wanted to just review some of the weight maintenance because I find that this one's a little bit more confusing. There's a there is a risk for excess calorie intake when you're on the Mediterranean diet.

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However, there is more of a balance when we think about the Mediterranean diet. There's a lot of mindful eating emphasis in your. There is a lot of emphasis on mindful eating in the Mediterranean diet, which is where we can find some of the research for having people in these Mediterranean regions just have better weight control, essentially.

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We also know that there is some benefit to all of that extra olive oil and some of the healthier, fiber rich ingredients that promotes satiety so enables you to stop eating before we get excessively for the lower processed amounts of food are also typically lower calorie, so having lots of fruits and vegetables to help fill us up

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is generally going to be lower calories than some of the other ones out there. So again, they looked at some different studies, and one of them showed that when the group was assigned to a more Mediterranean diet focus, they maintained some of their weight loss for a period of six years.

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A lot of diets usually maybe last six months to a year, and then maybe they even stopped studying them. But this one was great to show just the long term adherence, the ease of following a Mediterranean diet and the success in people doing slow but productive weight loss, essentially.

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So again, you can definitely eat higher calories on the Mediterranean diet and potentially gain weight. But if you are following some of the guidelines that you can see from the healthy my plate or the Mediterranean pyramid, then generally then people can find a happy medium with listening to their own hunger and fullness cues that mindful eating piece

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. So I did a little bit of graph. I heard this little graphic on the end of your screen because I want to just emphasize this mindful eating portion so you can see that part of it is talking about observing how we're feeling when we start eating.

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If we're stressed lonely, that sort of thing. Can we savor the different flavors half the time when we're eating, we're just breezing on through? And it's really hard to kind of focus on tasting and appreciating that food, being aware of what we're eating.

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So not having distractions around us, having a non-judgmental atmosphere when we're eating. So there's so much judgment over good foods versus bad foods where they're unhealthy or not. And can we remove that so that we can potentially enjoy some of maybe the not so healthy food in moderation and again, simply enjoy some of the really healthy foods

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as well? And then being in the moment, so staying present, that is a huge component of mindful eating. Again, not looking for immediate feedback from the different foods that you're eating, but trying to just general in general, really appreciate and love the food just like those folks in different parts of the Mediterranean regions.

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OK, so how do we get started with a Mediterranean diet? I always again start with that my plate or that Mediterranean plate. And typically what we can do first is add. So again, the diet mentality is to restrict, take out, avoid, punish yourself.

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So let's change that mind frame and start by adding something that's beneficial for us. And that typically involves those fruits and vegetables, right? I think we can all benefit from just a couple more servings of those a day.

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And this can be a lot of work at first, right? Kind of prepping those vegetables, making sure you're purchasing them, but not making them go to waste from too much purchasing. So I would encourage you to think about what you can add in.

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You can also think about the way you approach the protein section. So a lot of Mediterranean proteins are plant based, so beans, nuts and seeds are tofu or fermented products, and that can be really supportive of health, too, because of the high fiber content.

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Another thing you could add in is the whole grains. So finding a really good multigrain bread or maybe baking it from scratch using some of those ancient grains out there, like whole wheat, couscous or M.R. That one's a popular one in in the Italy area.

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You can do whole wheat noodles. You can also try to find things like bulgur and things that maybe you haven't cooked with as frequently. So definitely changing up or adding things in can be a great start for the Mediterranean diet.

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I would also encourage some meal planning, especially at the beginning, and this does not have to be the perfect Instagram page that you see occasionally with every night planned to a tee. But some planning can be really important for making sure that you're purchasing the stuff that you want to add or to even swap in.

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So the three components to meal planning I always like to add is you got to plan a little, even if it's just the level you want to purchase your smartly. So making sure you're not spending extra money and then you want to make time for preparing.

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So this can be the hardest part for some folks that are not used to being in the kitchen, especially if you're busy at work or school or with kids. So definitely making some time to actually prep the things that you're planning for can be can go a long way.

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We won't go too deep into this, but I would encourage you to look at the article below that some practical guide to shopping menu ideas and recipes that specifically aim to have somewhat follow that Mediterranean diet. And right now, I want you to think of which pea you could use a little bit more help with.

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Right? Do you have trouble planning? Do you have trouble once you're at the grocery store to purchase things in a way that is more affordable and budget friendly? Because I know sometimes we can plan elaborate meals and then spend way too much at the grocery store as a result and then preparing, are you making time to prep

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and to maybe batch cook, to save some time the rest of the week? So just take a moment to reflect on what p you need a little bit more support with. This is a great slide to just show some basic ingredients for a healthy, Mediterranean inspired kitchen.

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It goes over things that you could keep in your spice cabinet. You know, having lots of dried spices and herbs can be really huge for creating flavor and just having them ready. When you see a recipe that calls for dill or clove or something, that might be very specific.

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Having a bunch of different grains can be important to stock up on so that you can utilize them throughout different



weeks, having some proteins or frozen proteins ready on hand and then doing a variety of fruits and vegetables.

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Maybe some that don't go bad as quickly and then others that you might eat right away. So check that out. There's two links down here from old ways, and this is really supportive of the traditional Mediterranean diet and helps you stock your pantry in an appropriate way.

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And it also gives you a food glossary. If you're wondering about certain things that you're finding in cookbooks, et cetera. So the Mediterranean diet is typically a very flavorful diet because of different spices and herbs, but it is important to keep adding a little bit more.

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So again, that focus on adding to offset some of the processed foods that we might be eating as well. So this is just another idea of adding vegetables or plant based plant proteins like beans into soups or stew, blending vegetables into sauces to get that extra burst of nutrients.

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Beans and vegetables are common, especially in the Mediterranean region. So how can we incorporate those? They're very affordable as well. Swap your oils to olive oil. Traditionally, we usually say like olive oil has a low smoke point, and that's pretty true for American olive oil.

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I just read that if you get really pure extra virgin olive oil, it does have a slightly higher smoke point than your regular. So keep that in mind. Usually, a low to medium cooking is fine or baking with olive oil.

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However, if you are feeling that it's smoking pretty red readily, I would opt for avocado oil or canola oil the same similar fat profile. Adding berries in, especially during the peak seasons of the summer months and then maybe doing more frozen in the winter months and then whole grains as well.

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How about some inspiration to you? So these are some examples of a healthy egg salad sandwich like an open face where you got your whole wheat bread, you have some vegetables with it, not in your traditional just bunch of mayo on it, but also just lots of colors, right?

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And healthy fats. The bottom line here is a veggie breakfast hash, so spicing up breakfast in a way that can support vegetable intake. We have some salmon with green beans and tomatoes. So finding a nice whole grain to go with that like polenta or bulgur or something delicious.

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Stuffed peppers, so making your vegetable the focal point of the meal and then utilizing your protein in smaller quantities inside of the vegetable. And some other ideas, so sprinkling that some salad and having a bowl of fresh or frozen berries with your yogurt or oatmeal, tossing canned fish into different parts of meals or a vegetable side dish

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for protein, and then you can even boost the fiber content in, say, meatloaf by adding ground oats. You can also do this in muffins and things like that as well. So definitely, I'll give you some examples of cookbooks at the very end, but this hopefully gets here, gets you a little bit hungry for those Mediterranean type flavors

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. All right, our final topic is to make sure is to focus on exercise. I wanted to make sure that we when we think of the Mediterranean diet, we're also thinking of some of the lifestyle factors that they incorporate into that.

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Those countries essentially exercise is so important for cardiovascular health as well as brain health. And we want to see why. So let's look, it immediately helps our blood circulation. We also find that it increases levels of neuroprotective factors and it can start to grow new neurons, especially if you're taking a different route on a walk or if

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you're doing an exercise program or you're following the leader like a dance class or a step class that's been shown to help create new neurological pathways, which are so important for keeping that brain base and healthy. We also see an increased level of neurotransmitters that increase your mood.

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So this has the ability to help with your attention. Reaction times can make you feel that those feel good hormones, that pleasant feeling. And over time, these feel good hormones can have a big effect on our brain anatomy as well.

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When we exercise, it improves our blood pressure right away. It can help with just more again blood circulation and oxygen around the body, so we see those improvements in physical health as well. Improvement in cognitive function, behavioral disturbances and psychological conditions, so we find that when we actually study those that have either dementia or aren't slowly getting

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there, they we find that exercise can be helpful even when we're in a disease state. So especially with brain health, we find that this helps calm the body down. We know that in cardiovascular health, that immediately lowers blood pressure and can help with improving our HDL cholesterol, the good cholesterol.

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We also know that it's been really helpful for type two diabetes, so it's up taking our amount of glucose in the blood and creating more insulin sensitivity, so making our body work a little bit better. one study looked at exercise and how it can reduce the risk for heart or circulatory disease by about 35%.

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And then they found all these other great benefits, like reducing risk for osteoporosis, diabetes and even certain cancers. So how much do we need to get this benefit? That's where the new recommendations come in from the Center for Disease Control.

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They want people to aim for at least 150 minutes per week. That's the minimum amount. So increasing to about 250 can be a great goal in mind, too, if you're already at that 1:50. We also want to encourage some strengthening activities, either with something like yoga, where you're using your own bodyweight strength or building muscle, because that

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is also supportive of some of these things as well. So as the weather gets a little bit cooler this fall, start to think about ways that you can stay active. It's typically I find that there is a big a surge of activity in the summer months and then kind of this decrease as we get into the cooler

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months and a little bit of it decreases natural because there's less light, there's less pleasant weather to be enjoyed. So finding ways that we can stay active either indoors or outside still can be really key. So take a moment to think about what are you going to do this fall to make sure that you stay active in

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even the least amount of effort way, right? All right, so remember, the beauty of the Mediterranean diet is that it's based on an entire dietary pattern, not particular foods or nutrients. This is why it's seen as a very flexible diet and desirable to go on.

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I often call it even an eating plan rather than a diet, because it can be very sustainable and there's not any particular flavors that you have to gravitate towards. But again, some of these cookbooks will offer more traditional seasonings and different spices that you might not get in your general American world, right?

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So remember to increase vegetables to increase nuts and seeds, those whole grains? All of those are going to support fiber, which helps your gut bacteria helps with lowering the risk for autoimmune diseases and just in general, keeping up your good cardiovascular disease.

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So thanks for joining me today, if you have any questions you can email me at. Christine Jetpack Med dot org I appreciate your feedback and questions about the webinar today, and then I listed four cookbooks that I really enjoy.

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For more of a Mediterranean inspired cooking, so these are some of them can be found online that you wouldn't have to purchase. You could look at your local library for it, or if you just really want one cookbook, I really suggest any of these for.

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Thank you so much and I will see you there.