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## **Mediterranean diet: Live longer**

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**EATING** the Mediterranean way could help you live longer, according to the first study to look at how the dietary pattern relates to mortality.

Men whose diets were closest to the Mediterranean ideal were 21 per cent less likely to die over five years than men whose diets were least Mediterranean-like. Similar results were seen in women.

"These results provide strong evidence for a beneficial effect of higher conformity with the Mediterranean dietary pattern on risk of death from all causes, including deaths due to cardiovascular disease and cancer, in a US population," Dr. Panagiota N Mitrou of the University of Cambridge in the UK and colleagues conclude.

A number of studies have linked the Mediterranean diet, which is rich in fish, fruits and vegetables and nuts and low in dairy foods and red meat, to health benefits, the researchers note in the Archives of Internal Medicine.

They looked at diet and mortality in 380,296 men and women, 50 to 71 years old, who were participating in the National Institutes of Health-AARP Diet and Health Study.

For both men and women, the researchers found, the risk of death from any cause over the five-year follow-up period was lower for those with the most Mediterranean-like diets. Deaths from cancer or cardiovascular disease were also significantly lower in this group.

The benefit was especially strong in smokers who were not overweight, who nearly halved their risk of death if they closely followed the Mediterranean diet pattern.

Smokers may have had the most to gain from the antioxidant and blood fat-lowering effects of Mediterranean-style eating, Mitrou and colleagues suggest.