

**For Immediate Release:**

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**Mediterranean Diet Lowers Strokes by 30% Says Major New Study  
Local Cardiologist Provides Additional Insights  
Will 7 glasses of Wine a Week Really Lower Your Cardiovascular Risk?**

**Waldorf, Maryland- (March 13)-** Eating a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil, nuts, fruits and vegetables that includes a moderate intake of fatty fish and poultry, a very limited amount of dairy, red meat and sweets and up to seven glasses of red wine a week can lower the risk of stroke by as much as 30 percent, according to a new study published by the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The research, conducted in Spain, followed thousands of people between 55 and 80 years of age with at least three risk factors for cardiovascular disease, but no history of heart trouble. Headed by Miguel Angel Martinez-Gonzalez, a physician at the University of Navarre, the study is being hailed as important because of both its size and attention to scientific detail.

Terence Bertele, MD, the chief cardiologist with southern Maryland's Chesapeake & Washington Heart Care, notes that the study confirms the long-held belief that the Mediterranean diet promotes heart health.

"The true significance of this study versus others that have looked at Mediterranean diets," he says, "is that it focused solely on heart attacks and strokes rather than getting mired down in risk factors like cholesterol, hypertension or obesity."

The men and women in the study were assigned to either a low-fat diet, a Mediterranean diet that emphasized nuts or a Mediterranean diet that focused on olive oil. In addition to classic Mediterranean ingredients, the olive oil group consumed about four tablespoons a day, while the nuts group ate about three servings of walnuts, hazelnuts and almonds a week. The low-fat group ate low-fat dairy, breads, potatoes, fruits, vegetables and lean fish and avoided baked goods, nuts, red and processed meat and fatty fish.

At the end of the five-year period, the group that consumed a diet that included nuts had the lowest incidence of cardiovascular events, followed by those in the olive oil group and finally the low-fat group. The risk of stroke was reduced 30% in the two Mediterranean-diet groups, while the difference in the number of heart attacks was not statistically meaningful.

Bertele acknowledges that there are many differences between the foods consumed by all of the groups in the study and the typical American diet – particularly in their predominant use of olive oil versus other fats and lack of red meat and processed sweets. "Simply adding nuts or any of these components without subtracting some less healthy elements of your diet will not yield the same benefits."

Bertele suggests substituting olive oil for butter in cooking and eschewing chips or other processed snacks in favor of a handful of nuts. In addition, he advocates that people “adopt a rule of meatless Mondays and routinely switch out red meat for chicken, pork or fish. ”

“And, of course,” he adds, “wine should always be consumed in moderation, and in conjunction with a meal.”

Need help visualizing a Mediterranean diet? Blue Wind Gourmet in Lexington Park has many offerings that fit in with this type of regime. Owner Rob Plant notes that olive is the only type of oil used in his recipes, many of which feature seafood, organic greens, lean meats and fruits and vegetables including tomatoes and avocados.

“We are committed to offering our customers many of the kinds of foods that are recommended by a Mediterranean-style diet, not only because of the obvious health benefits, but because they are so pleasing to the palate,” Plant says.

To get an evaluation of your heart health or to discuss any concerns, contact Chesapeake & Washington Heart Care, 301.645.5100 (Waldorf) or 301.475.3240 (Leonardtown), or go to [www.chesheart.com](http://www.chesheart.com).

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**Photo Cut Line:** Terence Bertele, MD, the chief cardiologist with Southern Maryland’s Chesapeake & Washington Heart Care, says that a recent study confirms the long-held belief that the Mediterranean diet dramatically improves heart health.

**Photo Credit:** Darrin Farrell

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