

An oil to strike stroke

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NEW(S)

“We’ve been hearing about the benefits of olive oil for years, but now it looks like it could help prevent strokes....”^[1]

VIEWS

Traditional Mediterranean diet (MedDiet) emphasizes abundance of food from plant sources (fresh vegetables, fruits, breads, potatoes, cereals and whole grains, nuts, beans and seeds, minimally processed foods) with olive oil as the primary source of fat instead of other undesirable fats, plus dairy products, fish, poultry and wine (men 7oz, women 3½ oz) in low to moderate amounts. Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fats (MUFA), and can reduce LDL cholesterol. Phenolic compounds in olive oil may favorably affect cardiovascular risk factors, such as lipid profile, blood pressure, endothelial dysfunction, oxidative stress and antithrombotic profiles through their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Dietary MUFA may be protective against age-related cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s disease, while promoting healthier aging and increased longevity.^[2]

A study involving 7,625 people >65 years, with no history of stroke was carried out in France. Olive oil consumption was categorized as “no use,” “moderate use” (cooking or as dressing or with bread), and “intensive use,” (both cooking and as dressing or with bread). There were 148 strokes after

about 5 years, and after excluding other risk factors, it was concluded that regular usage of olive oil (both cooking and as dressing) had a 41% lower risk of stroke compared to those who never used (1.5% vs. 2.6%).^[3]

TAIL PIECE

There are many reasons to support that a high consumption of olive oil may provide protection against myocardial infarction. Studies conducted in Spain, Italy and Greece came out with an inverse association between olive oil consumption and the risk of myocardial infarction.^[4,5] Further, in a review of epidemiological studies relating olive oil, compared to other lipids rich in saturated fats, it has been found that there is a decreased risk of cancers arising from upper digestive and respiratory tract, breast and possibly, colorectal and other sites.^[6]

Of all the oils/fats that are used for cooking, olive oil seems to contain the highest concentration of MUFA. One has to check for virginity! The word “virgin” indicates that it is pure, unrefined and extracted (by pressing) without heat or chemicals. Virgin oil is the healthiest, since it contains the highest levels of polyphenols, antioxidants.

Journey in the race track topped up with unadulterated olive oil, might be smooth for the thinkers (brain) as well as the feelers (heart).

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