

Mediterranean Diet May Lower Preeclampsia Risk

The Mediterranean diet could also reduce risk for gestational diabetes, preterm birth and more.

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A study published in [JAMA Network Open](#) found that women who adhere to the Mediterranean diet have a significantly lower risk of developing preeclampsia, a serious blood pressure condition that develops during [pregnancy](#) and can cause serious complications, including decreased blood supply to the fetus.

The [Mediterranean diet](#) typically consists of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, fish, legumes, seeds, herbs and spices. Investigators from the Smidt Heart Institute at Cedars-Sinai evaluated the association between this [diet](#) and adverse pregnancy outcomes, such as preterm birth, delivery of an infant that's small for its gestational age, stillbirth, gestational diabetes and [hypertension](#).

"This multicenter, population-based study validates that a healthier eating pattern is associated with a lower risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, the most exciting being a 28% lower risk for preeclampsia," said Natalie Bello, MD, MPH, director of Hypertension Research at Smidt Heart Institute and the senior and corresponding author of the study, in a [Cedars-Sinai news release](#). "Importantly, this connection between the Mediterranean diet and lower risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes was seen in a geographically, racially and ethnically diverse population."

For the study, researchers administered questionnaires to 7,798 women who were pregnant with their first child. Of the participants, 10% were 35 years old or older, 11% were non-Hispanic Black, 17% were Latino and 4% were Asian.

Women self-reported their intake of common foods and beverages during the three months prior to their visit. Responses were then categorized based on how well participants adhered to the Mediterranean diet's components, including consumption of vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, legumes, fish and minimal consumption of red and processed meats and alcohol.

Those who most closely followed the diet had a 21% lower risk of having any adverse pregnancy outcomes. What's more, those individuals also had a 28% developing preeclampsia or eclampsia (the onset of seizures or coma with signs or symptoms of preeclampsia) and a 37% lower risk of developing gestational diabetes.

Researchers said these findings add to growing evidence that the Mediterranean-style diet may play an important role in the health of women not only during pregnancy but throughout life.

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