



THE MCDUGALL NEWSLETTER | *It's the food.*



The Mediterranean Diet Is a Weight-Gainer The Asian Diet Should Be Our Goal

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Once again the Mediterranean Diet is [in the news](#) for its health promoting properties. Not only is this diet promoted for its “heart healthy” benefits, it is also sold to the public as the best way to achieve and to maintain a healthy body weight. However, I have come to the [opposite conclusion](#).

In order to provide *proof beyond any reasonable doubt* of the culpability of diet, I have put this table together showing the incidence of obesity compared to fat intake in various countries worldwide. (I have highlighted the countries of Southeast and East Asia in green and the Mediterranean countries in yellow. The few countries in these regions that have become westernized are highlighted in blue.)

Nine out of 11 of the countries with the lowest rates of obesity (<10% incidence) are in Southeast and East Asia. The one exception is Malaysia. If I include Malaysia in this region of the world then the obesity rate is 4.8 percent. When I exclude Malaysia, which has had in recent years a more rapid transition to a diet of animal foods and oils than the rest of Asia, then the obesity rate is only 3.6 percent

Now look at the Mediterranean countries. Most of them fall in the middle range of obesity incidence, with the only exception being Italy, which has a fairly low rate of obesity. (However, the rate of obesity among Italian children is high, indicating a trend toward joining other Mediterranean countries in the near future.) When Italy is included, then the average obesity rate for the Mediterranean countries is 18.8 percent. Without Italy, it is 19.6 percent.

While education and financial matters are often cited as important variables, I can confidently tell you that these are not the problem. Consider that some of the strongest economies are in Southeast and East Asia where people are trim and healthy. Bankruptcies are everyday news in the Mediterranean regions. Educational achievement follows a similar pattern, with the highest levels found throughout Asia.

Comparing rates of obesity worldwide gives the most compelling clues about the best diets for achieving and maintaining a trim body weight. In Asia, where the bulk of the food is rice, with no dairy foods, and very little meat, fewer than 5 percent of people are obese. Make nuts and olive oil a focus of eating, i.e. the Mediterranean Diet, and the obesity rates hit 20 percent. In the US and other Western countries, where meat, dairy products, and vegetable oils satisfy people's appetites, overweight and obesity have become the norm. (Obesity is a more severe form of being overweight, which affects nearly two-thirds of Americans.)

Even more than the obnoxious habit of smoking, the greatest health challenge to the US and other Western countries is the food, which causes obesity and associated illnesses, such as type-2 diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, and common cancers (breast, prostate, and colon). Obesity now affects 34 percent of Americans. My conclusion from this worldwide comparison is that it is time for doctors, dietitians, scientists, and national leaders to focus on rice instead of nuts and olive oil in an effort to solve the obesity epidemic. My advice to individuals is to forget the Mediterranean Diet—you and your family deserve better.

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Country Name	Obesity - adult prevalence rate (%)	Year of Estimate	Region
Tonga	56	2000	CPolynesia
Kiriba ti	51	2006	Central Tropical Pacific
Saudi Ara bia	36	2000	Western Asia
Unite d Sta tes	34	2006	Unite States
Unite d Arab Emir-ates	34	2000	Arabian Peninsula
Egypt	30	2006	NE Africa (MED)
Kuwa it	29	2000	Arabian Peninsula
New Zeala nd	27	2007	New Zeala nd
Seychelles	25	2004	Africa
Fiji	24	2004	Melanesia
Mexico	24	2000	South America
Canada	23	2004	Canada
Israel	23	2001	Middle East (MED)
Unite d King dom	23	2002	Europe
Greece	23	2003	SE Europe (MED)
Croatia	22	2003	Central Europe (MED)
Chile	22	2003	South America
Bos nia and Herze-govina	22	2002	SE Europe
Malta	21	2007	S Europe (MED)
Lithua nia	20	2006	N Europe
Jordan	20	2004	Middle East
Poland	18	2001	C Europe
Hungary	18	2004	C Europe
France	17	2007	W Europe (MED)
Australia	16	2005	Australia
Malaysia	16	2006	SE Asia
Peru	16	2000	S America
Turkey	16	2007	SE Europe & W Asia (MED)
Morocco	16	2000	N African (MED)
Zimba bwe	16	2005	S Africa
Finland	16	2008	N Europe
Spain	16	2007	SW Europe (MED)
Latvia	16	2006	N Europe
Czech Republic	15	2002	C Europe
Slovenia	15	2001	C Europe (MED)

Table Continued			
Country Name	Obesity - adult prevalence rate (%)	Year of Estimate	Region
Estonia	14	2004	N Europe
Slovakia	14	2002	C Europe
Portugal	14	2005	SW Europe
Iran	14	2005	W Asia
Colombia	14	2007	NW S America
Lebanon	14	2004	E Mediterranean (MED)
Ireland	13	2002	NW Europe
Germany	13	2003	WC Europe
Iceland	12	2002	Europe
Bulgaria	12	2001	SE Europe
Sweden	12	2009	N Europe
Cuba	12	2002	Caribbean
Denmark	11	2006	N Europe
Brazil	11	2003	S America
Austria	11	2008	C Europe
Belgium	11	2001	W Europe
Norway	10	2009	Scandinavia
Mongolia	10	2005	East & Central Asia
Italy	10	2005	S Europe
Romania	9	2000	Central & SE Europe
Switzerland	8	2007	W Europe
Thailand	8	2003	SE Asia
Singapore	7	2004	SE Asia
Philippines	4	2003	SE Asia
Eritrea	3	2004	Africa
Korea, South	3	2001	SE Asia
Japan	3	2000	SE Asia
China	3	2002	SE Asia
Indonesia	2	2001	SE Asia
Madagascar	2	2005	Africa
Laos	1	2000	SE Asia
Vietnam	1	2000	SE Asia