



## **Mediterranean diet boosts endurance within days**

**Eating a Mediterranean diet, which has extra virgin olive oil at its heart, can improve the endurance of athletes after just four days, according to researchers at an American university.**

The study carried out by Saint Louis University (SLU) in St. Louis, Missouri found that participants ran a 5K six percent faster after eating a Mediterranean diet than after eating a Western diet, despite similar heart rates and ratings of perceived exertion.

Senior researcher Edward Weiss, Ph.D., a professor of nutrition and dietetics at SLU, and his team had hypothesized that the diet's well-established anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects might lead to improved exercise performance.

Seven women and four men, all recreationally active, participated in the study that saw them run five kilometers on a treadmill on two occasions—once after four days on a Mediterranean diet and on another occasion after four days on a Western diet, with a period of nine to 16 days separating the two tests.

Their findings extended existing evidence of the health benefits of the diet by showing that it is also effective for improving endurance exercise performance in as little as four days, according to the conclusion published in last month's Journal of the American College of Nutrition.

The Mediterranean diet, which includes a high consumption of vegetables, nuts, fish and extra virgin olive oil, has regularly been praised by scientists in published studies. Unlike the Western diet, it avoids red and processed meats, dairy, trans and saturated fats and refined sugars.

Professor Weiss noted that it made sense for the diet to improve exercise performance immediately or within a few days due to its nutrients. He warned, however, that these benefits were also quickly lost when switching back to the Western diet, highlighting the importance of long-term adherence to it.

One of the key nutrients is oleic acid and it is found naturally in many food sources, most notably in extra virgin olive oil—boasting a range of 55-83% of this beneficial mono-saturated fatty acid. Among all available olive oils, Italian olive oils are said to contain the highest level of this beneficial acid.

A study led by the University of Navarra Medical School in north Spain concluded last year that a Mediterranean diet supplemented by extra virgin olive oil or nuts had a lower incidence of major cardiovascular events than a reduced-fat diet.

The diet has also been recently linked to lower risks in strokes in women, obesity and depression, as well as preventing the development of intestinal tumors.

The international TAICHI project is spreading the word about the health benefits of using extra virgin olive oil for cooking to Mainland China and Taiwan.



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Co-funded by the EU and promoted by the two main consortia of Italian olive growers, Italia Olivicola and UNAPOL, the TAICHI project offers consumers all the information they need to understand olive oil through its website, various social media platforms and OurOliveOil APP – available in the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

**Sources:**

<https://www.slu.edu/news/2019/march/mediterranean-diet-boosts-endurance-exercise.php>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07315724.2019.1568322>

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