



Poor dietary habits are a bigger killer globally than smoking

Mediterranean countries have some of the lowest numbers of diet-related deaths in the world, according to a new report funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that revealed from between 1990 and 2017 poor dietary habits were a bigger killer than smoking.

The Mediterranean diet, which has extra virgin olive oil at its core and includes a high consumption of vegetables, nuts and fish, has regularly been praised by scientists in published studies for its health benefits, such as lowering the risks of obesity, depression and strokes.

China was found to have the world's highest intake of sodium, making it the country's leading dietary risk for death. Soy and other salty sauces, as well as the rising popularity of processed foods, were listed as contributing causes.

Published in the medical journal *The Lancet*, the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 is an authoritative assessment of how people are dying in 195 countries by analyzing factors like dietary risks.

Researchers noted, however, that this is not an obesity issue, but relates to diets containing too much salt, too few whole grains or too little fruit. These suboptimal diets are damaging hearts, causing cancer and are involved in one-in-five deaths around the world.

Other dietary risk factors mentioned in the study were diets low in polyunsaturated fatty acids and high in trans fatty acids, such as those found in vegetable oils. A report from the US Food and Drug Administration last year endorsed claims that replacing these fats and oils high in saturated fat with oils containing high levels of oleic acid can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

Oleic acid, a beneficial monosaturated fatty acid, can be found naturally in many food sources, notably in extra virgin olive oil which boasts a range of 55-83%. Among all available olive oils, Italian olive oils are said to contain the highest level of oleic acid, regardless of cultivar or genetic heritage.

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.

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.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)30041-8/fulltext#seccestitle220](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30041-8/fulltext#seccestitle220)

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