



## Mediterranean diet may help reduce depression in young adults

**Symptoms of mild depression in young adults could be alleviated by limiting the consumption of highly processed foods and adhering to a diet that includes fruit, vegetable, fish and extra virgin olive oil, such as the renowned Mediterranean diet.**

Evidence of the link between diet and mental wellness was found through two new studies published in October. The first was a randomized controlled trial (RCT) by a team of Australian researchers and the second was a student-led social enterprise between Manchester Metropolitan University and the British charity Anxiety UK.

Results of the three-week RCT published in the scientific journal PLOS ONE found that anxiety and stress dropped significantly in the group following the Mediterranean diet, compared to the control group that maintained their usual diets. The diet change group, all aged between 17 and 35, also enjoyed improved mood and a decrease in their depression scores.

Because the participants were young adults and university undergraduate students, the researchers had anticipated several potential barriers, such as the symptoms of depression presenting as barriers to eating well. In fact, there was a significant increase in the recommended foods and decrease in processed foods, providing objective evidence to support compliance with the diet.

The study also noted that diet is a modifiable risk factor for depression and is a good target for early intervention. It added, however, "There is convincing observational evidence for a link between diet quality and depression, the evidence for a causal relationship is still emerging, particularly in relation to young adults."

Similar findings emerged in the Manchester-based initiative, which was designed to promote the importance of nutrition and food sustainability. Driven by the growing evidence of a link between gut, brain and positive mental health, a new guide on how food influences mood has been published that examines the components of a healthy diet in relation to stress.

The guide recommends a plant-based diet, high in grains, fibers and fish, citing a typical Mediterranean diet as inspiration. Regularly praised by scientists in published studies, the diet includes a high consumption of vegetables, nuts, fish and extra virgin olive oil. It excludes red and processed meats, dairy, trans and saturated fats and refined sugars.

Notably, one of the diet's key nutrients is oleic acid, a beneficial monounsaturated fatty acid. It occurs naturally in many food sources, especially extra virgin olive oil, which boasts a range of 55-83%. Of all the available olive oils, Italian varieties are said to contain the highest levels.

Depression and anxiety are on the rise across China, according to the country's first-ever nationwide study of mental health. Published in peer-reviewed journal *The Lancet Psychiatry* in March, the survey found that an estimated 16.6 percent of Chinese adults had experienced mental illness at some point in their lives, with depression on the rise.

The international TAICHI project is spreading information 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](#).

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To find out more about the TAICHI project, visit [OurOliveOil.com](http://OurOliveOil.com)

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