# Dietary choices for better cardiovascular health



In a recent discussion highlighting the importance of dietary choices for cardiovascular health, vascular surgeon Dr Oscar Merino provided insights into how certain foods can potentially prevent life-threatening conditions such as heart attacks and circulation issues. Dr Merino, who specialises in the management of complications related to arteries, veins, and lymphatic vessels, underscores the necessity of preventing major vascular risk factors, including smoking, hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol.

Speaking to Ultimahora, Dr Merino advocated for a Mediterranean-style diet, which prioritises the consumption of fruits and vegetables. These food groups are hailed for their high content of antioxidants, fibre, and vitamins that are beneficial for arterial health. He further elaborated on the importance of whole grains, citing that cereals, bread, and pasta made from whole grains can help reduce cholesterol levels due to their fibre content.

Dr Merino specifically recommended several healthy food options for their beneficial fat content: - **Avocado**: Known for its high concentration of monounsaturated fats, particularly oleic acid, avocado oil is linked to improved heart health and contains antioxidants that may support eye health. - **Olive Oil**: A staple of the Mediterranean diet, olive oil is associated with various health benefits due to its encompassing nutrients. - **Nuts**: While nut oils are beneficial, whole nuts provide additional fibrous nutrients. Walnut oil, in particular, is noted for its omega-3 fatty acid content.

In addition to diet, Dr Merino emphasises the importance of physical fitness and weight management in maintaining circulatory health. He stated, “Exercises such as walking, swimming, or cycling significantly improve circulation.” He pointed out the correlation between overweight individuals and a greater predisposition to both arterial and venous vascular diseases.

Dr Merino also addressed the common concern of varicose veins, explaining their occurrence due to malfunctioning venous valves in the legs that impede adequate blood return to the heart, leading to blood accumulation and vein dilation. Factors contributing to the development of varicose veins include genetics, a sedentary lifestyle, obesity, and hormonal changes. He recommended activating calf muscles as a natural remedy to assist blood flow back to the heart, noting that physical activity, particularly walking, increases blood circulation and promotes the formation of collateral circulation.

The expert also highlighted the link between blood circulation and hair health. He explained that proper blood flow to the scalp is essential for nourishing hair follicles. Insufficient circulation can lead to weakened follicles and contribute to hair loss. To mitigate this, Dr Merino suggests scalp massages, an active lifestyle, and a balanced diet rich in iron, biotin, and zinc while advising to minimise stress.

Lastly, Dr Merino discussed emerging research regarding tattoos and their potential effects on the lymphatic system. He noted that some studies suggest ink particles may migrate from the tattoo site into the lymphatic vessels and accumulate in lymph nodes, potentially leading to chronic inflammation. However, he also mentioned that there are differing opinions in the medical community regarding whether this accumulation poses significant health risks. He concluded by stressing the need for comprehensive studies to draw definitive conclusions regarding tattoos and lymphatic health.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30817261/> - This study supports the benefits of the Mediterranean diet for cardiovascular health by highlighting its ability to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. The diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats, which are essential components mentioned by Dr Merino.
2. <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIRCRESAHA.118.313348> - This article provides a critical review of the Mediterranean diet's impact on cardiovascular health, noting its reduction of major cardiovascular events by about 30%. This aligns with Dr Merino's recommendations for a Mediterranean-style diet to prevent vascular issues.
3. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/mediterranean-diet> - This resource from the American Heart Association underscores the Mediterranean diet as beneficial for heart health, mentioning its focus on whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, which are similar to Dr Merino's dietary recommendations.
4. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4339461/> - This review highlights the Mediterranean diet's role in reducing cardiovascular disease risk, emphasizing the benefits of its components like olive oil and nuts. These are consistent with Dr Merino's suggestions for healthy fats in avocados and nuts.
5. <https://www.medstarhealth.org/blog/mediterranean-diet-cardiovascular-health> - This article supports the Mediterranean diet's effectiveness in lowering heart disease risk and discusses the importance of whole foods over ultra-processed foods, aligning with Dr Merino's emphasis on whole grains and vegetables.
6. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Iron-HealthProfessional/> - Although not directly mentioned in the search results, this URL from the National Institutes of Health provides information on iron, which Dr Merino noted is essential for hair health and overall circulation. Maintaining adequate iron levels supports the broader health benefits discussed.
7. <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/health/vascular-surgeon-says-3-supermarket-10109120> - Please view link - unable to able to access data