# Plant-based Planetary Health and Mediterranean diets cut early death risk by over 20%



Recent research has reaffirmed the profound impact of dietary choices on both individual health and environmental sustainability. A comprehensive study presented by the European Society of Cardiology explores how two renowned plant-based diets—the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) and the Mediterranean Diet—can significantly lower the risk of early death, highlighting their potential benefits in reducing mortality rates by over 20%, while also contributing to environmental preservation.

Heart disease continues to be a principal cause of death globally, and dietary habits have been linked to this alarming statistic. The findings suggest that poor eating patterns account for about one in five early deaths in Europe, indicating that thousands of lives could be saved annually through improved dietary choices. Dr. Mercedes Sotos Prieto, the lead investigator from the Autonomous University of Madrid, stated, “The Planetary Health Diet was designed to improve diet quality while reducing harm to the environment,” further elucidating the study's intent to compare its effects with the well-documented Mediterranean Diet.

Both diets promote a wholesome approach to eating, centring on the consumption of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and healthy oils, while limiting processed foods and red meat. Specifically, the PHD encourages about 2,500 calories per day, advocating for a balanced intake of plant foods, while the Mediterranean Diet is celebrated for its rich variety of seasonal produce and emphasis on olive oil. Although they share fundamental elements, there are differences in the types and quantities of animal products included.

To substantiate these dietary recommendations, Dr. Sotos Prieto’s research analysed data from a significant cohort of over 11,000 adults participating in the ENRICA study, tracking their dietary habits over an average span of 14 years. The evidence indicated that participants who adhered most closely to the PHD exhibited a 22% lower likelihood of dying compared to those with less adherence, while those following the Mediterranean Diet saw a 21% reduction in the same risk. Notably, certain foods were tied to even greater longevity; for PHD followers, increased consumption of fruits, dairy, and healthy fats proved beneficial, whereas Mediterranean dieters benefited from increased nut intake and reduced consumption of sugary and processed foods.

The environmental implications of these dietary choices were examined using the SHARP-Indicators Database, which assesses greenhouse gas emissions and land use. The PHD resulted in an estimated 4.15 kilograms of CO₂ emissions per person per day, while the Mediterranean Diet accounted for slightly higher emissions at 4.36 kilograms, demonstrating that both diets maintain a relatively low environmental footprint. The environmental cost was primarily linked to dairy and meat consumption in both dietary models, reinforcing the notion that a plant-centric diet can mitigate climate change and resource depletion.

This research is particularly pertinent given the ongoing global challenges posed by climate change and rising rates of diet-related diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. As food choices become increasingly crucial in combating these pressing issues, Dr. Sotos Prieto emphasised the beneficial interplay of health and planetary outcomes associated with adopting either diet. “The results highlight the substantial health and planetary advantages of adopting one of these plant-based diets,” she remarked.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that adopting either the PHD or the Mediterranean Diet can significantly enhance longevity and contribute to a healthier planet. Not only do these diets offer practical habits for everyday living—such as using olive oil, increasing fruit and legume intake, and reducing red meat consumption—but they also underscore the powerful impact of dietary choices in the broader context of global health and environmental sustainability.

Research findings are available for further exploration on the European Society of Cardiology website.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thebrighterside.news/post/diet-choices-can-lower-the-risk-of-early-death-by-over-20/), [[2]](https://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Press-Office/Press-releases/Planetary-Health-Diet-and-Mediterranean-Diet-Associated-with-Similar-Survival-and-Sustainability-Benefits)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.thebrighterside.news/post/diet-choices-can-lower-the-risk-of-early-death-by-over-20/), [[3]](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2025/04/250404140617.htm)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2024/06/10/planetary-diet-lower-mortality/), [[5]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39208450/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.medicalxpress.com/news/2025-04-planetary-health-diet-mediterranean-similar.html), [[7]](https://www.news-medical.net/news/20250404/Two-plant-based-diets-linked-to-similar-survival-benefits-and-low-environmental-impact.aspx)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.thebrighterside.news/post/diet-choices-can-lower-the-risk-of-early-death-by-over-20/), [[2]](https://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Press-Office/Press-releases/Planetary-Health-Diet-and-Mediterranean-Diet-Associated-with-Similar-Survival-and-Sustainability-Benefits)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thebrighterside.news/post/diet-choices-can-lower-the-risk-of-early-death-by-over-20/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Press-Office/Press-releases/Planetary-Health-Diet-and-Mediterranean-Diet-Associated-with-Similar-Survival-and-Sustainability-Benefits> - A study presented at the ESC Preventive Cardiology 2025 congress found that both the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) and the Mediterranean Diet are associated with similar survival benefits and low environmental impact. The research, led by Dr. Mercedes Sotos Prieto, analysed data from over 11,000 adults in Spain and concluded that higher adherence to these diets was linked to a 22% lower chance of dying compared to those with low adherence. Both diets also demonstrated comparable low environmental footprints, highlighting their health and planetary advantages.
3. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2025/04/250404140617.htm> - Research presented at the ESC Preventive Cardiology 2025 congress indicates that both the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) and the Mediterranean Diet are associated with similar survival benefits and low environmental impact. The study, led by Dr. Mercedes Sotos Prieto, analysed data from over 11,000 adults in Spain and found that higher adherence to these diets was linked to a 22% lower chance of dying compared to those with low adherence. Both diets also demonstrated comparable low environmental footprints, underscoring their health and planetary advantages.
4. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2024/06/10/planetary-diet-lower-mortality/> - A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that individuals adhering closely to the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) had a 30% lower risk of premature death compared to those with the lowest adherence. The PHD emphasises minimally processed plant foods, such as nuts, beans, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and olive oil, along with modest amounts of meat, fish, eggs, and dairy. The study also noted a 29% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a 51% reduction in cropland use among those following the diet.
5. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39208450/> - A study published in the European Heart Journal assessed the association between adherence to the Planetary Health Diet Index (PHDI) and cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk. The cohort study included 118,469 individuals aged 40-69 years from the UK Biobank, free of CVD at baseline. Over a 9.4-year follow-up, higher adherence to the PHDI was associated with a lower risk of CVD, myocardial infarction, and stroke. The study concluded that adherence to the PHDI was linked to a reduced risk of CVD among middle-aged and older adults in the UK.
6. <https://www.medicalxpress.com/news/2025-04-planetary-health-diet-mediterranean-similar.html> - Research presented at the ESC Preventive Cardiology 2025 congress found that both the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) and the Mediterranean Diet are associated with similar survival benefits and low environmental impact. The study, led by Dr. Mercedes Sotos Prieto, analysed data from over 11,000 adults in Spain and concluded that higher adherence to these diets was linked to a 22% lower chance of dying compared to those with low adherence. Both diets also demonstrated comparable low environmental footprints, highlighting their health and planetary advantages.
7. <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20250404/Two-plant-based-diets-linked-to-similar-survival-benefits-and-low-environmental-impact.aspx> - A study presented at the ESC Preventive Cardiology 2025 congress found that both the Planetary Health Diet (PHD) and the Mediterranean Diet are associated with similar survival benefits and low environmental impact. The research, led by Dr. Mercedes Sotos Prieto, analysed data from over 11,000 adults in Spain and concluded that higher adherence to these diets was linked to a 22% lower chance of dying compared to those with low adherence. Both diets also demonstrated comparable low environmental footprints, highlighting their health and planetary advantages.