

Mediterranean diet is linked to higher muscle mass, bone density after menopause

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The heart-healthy Mediterranean diet also appears to be good for an older woman's bones and muscles, a new study of postmenopausal women in Brazil finds. The study results will be presented Monday at

ENDO 2018, the Endocrine Society's 100th annual meeting in Chicago, Ill.

The researchers reported finding higher bone [mass](#) and muscle mass in [postmenopausal women](#) who adhered to a Mediterranean diet than in those who did not. This way of eating involves a high intake of fruits and vegetables, grains, potatoes, olive oil and seeds; moderately high fish intake; low saturated fat, dairy and red meat consumption; and regular but moderate drinking of red wine. The Mediterranean diet has been linked to a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and certain other chronic diseases.

Few studies, however, are available about the Mediterranean diet and its effects on body composition after menopause, said the study's lead investigator, Thais Rasia Silva, Ph.D., a postdoctoral student at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil. This information is important, she said, because menopause, with its decline in estrogen, speeds a woman's loss of bone mass, increasing her risk of the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis and broken bones. In addition, menopause and aging reduce muscle mass. Silva said declines in skeletal muscle mass and strength in older people are major contributors to increased illness, reduced quality of life and higher death rates.

Silva and her co-workers conducted their study in 103 healthy women from southern Brazil, who had an average age of 55 and who had gone through menopause 5.5 years earlier, on average. All women underwent bone scans to measure their [bone](#) mineral density, total body fat and appendicular lean mass, which was used to estimate skeletal muscle mass. The subjects also completed a food questionnaire about what they ate in the past month.

A higher Mediterranean diet score (MDS), meaning better adherence to the Mediterranean diet, was significantly associated with higher [bone](#)

mineral density measured at the lumbar spine and with greater muscle mass, Silva reported. This association, she said, was independent of whether the women used hormone therapy previously, their prior smoking behavior or their current level of physical activity, as measured by wearing a pedometer for six days.

"We found that the Mediterranean diet could be a useful nonmedical strategy for the prevention of osteoporosis and fractures in postmenopausal women," Silva said.

Given the many health benefits of the Mediterranean diet, Silva added, "Postmenopausal women, especially those with low bone mass, should ask their doctor whether they might benefit from consuming this dietary pattern."

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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