

Modern and traditional diet: which one?

The modern diet is the diet followed by many people, among them teenagers and workers; it consists mainly of fat foods, without many other important nutrients. Many people say that it is tastier than the traditional diet, but this is not true; in fact, the traditional diet, such as the Mediterranean one, uses a variety of seasonings to make dishes tastier. Moreover, it is a balanced diet, regarding fats, carbohydrates and proteins.

There are some common features in the Mediterranean diet:

1. a great consumption of fruit, vegetables, potatoes, beans, walnuts, bread and cereals;
2. the use of olive oil to cook and season;
3. moderate amounts of fish, but little amounts of meat;
4. consumption of cheese and yoghurt;
5. moderate consumption of wine, usually during lunch or supper;
6. use of local and seasonal products;
7. active lifestyle.

Young people's diet mainly consists of pasta, rice, meat, eggs, fish, but not in a balanced quantity. In fact, meat is preferred to fish, fats to proteins and vitamins. But teenagers do not care a lot about this.

Why do young people choose to have lunch at McDonald's rather than having a healthy lunch following the Mediterranean diet? Because they are attracted by television, and they do not think about what they really eat. For example, we are used to cooking and eating peeled potatoes, without knowing that most of the nutrients of this food are in the peel, so we eat much calories and not enough nutrients.

Moreover, television and the Internet show celebrities who are very thin and so girls in particular are pushed to imitate these people, in order to be more attractive. Some of them also get anorexic, refusing food because they think they will be fat eating a little bit. Others influenced by advertising eat too much and don't do any sport, and they become obese. For all these reasons the young should be more careful about their diet.

What should they do in order to improve their eating habits?

First of all, it is important to eat different types of food; many people usually have the same breakfast or lunch every day, and this means that some vitamins or proteins are not eaten. Scientists and dieticians say that every day people should eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables; but for different reasons few people eat the right quantity. Many studies have shown that, every day, a quarter of the world population do not eat vegetables. Teenagers do not like vegetables very much, so they prefer going to a McDonald restaurant and have a cheeseburger, which is doubtless tastier; they do not worry about their health, because they are young, they do sports, they feel well...but

over the years they may have many types of problems, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and cardiovascular problems. An interesting thing is that our ancestors ate simple food, but more healthily than us; in fact, even if they did not have the wide choice of food we have today, they used to vary their diet, which provided them all types of proteins and vitamins they needed.

In recent years scientists have studied the RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) for each nutrient the human body needs and it has resulted that the Mediterranean diet covers all these needs. Studies show that people who follow this type of diet live longer than the others; this is not a specific program to lose weight, but a set of habits traditionally followed by the people living in the Mediterranean region.