The Mediterranean diet is actually a combination of diets that have certain common features.

Olive oil is one of them — a healthier alternative to butter.

Spoon hitting bowl

Herbs and spices replace salt as seasoning.

There are lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and nuts. Even some red wine.

There's not a lot of processed food. Meat is a condiment, rather than a staple.

Fish and poultry could be eaten a couple times a week, but red meat might only be served a couple times a month.
And in this diet, salmon on plate

how you eat is as key as was what you eat.

In the Mediterranean region, traditionally people have eaten together as a family, and that’s an important part. Exercising between these meals is, too.

So it can have a powerful effect on health.

But, here’s the rub:

Too much of a good thing is too much of a good thing.

You still need to watch your total calories — even if they are the healthier ones that come from a Mediterranean meal like this.

For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I’m Jeff Olsen.