

NUTRITION UPDATE

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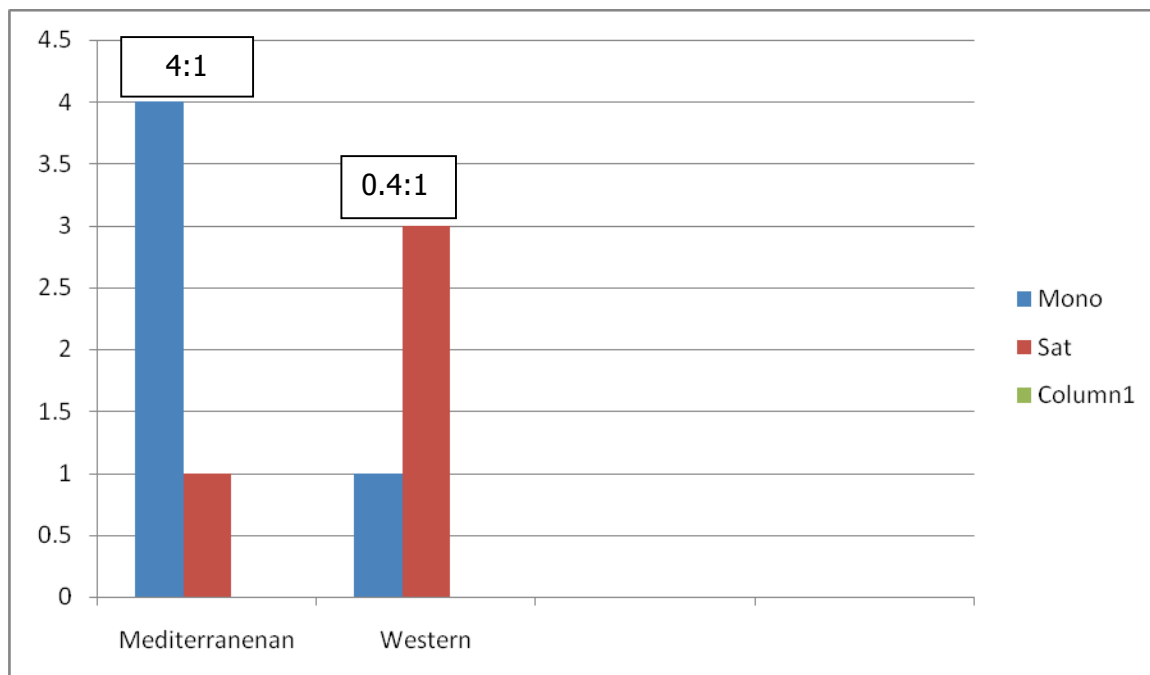
What Dietary Ratios Tell Us

One of the best ways to examine the chemical content of the diet from a disease risk prospective is to look at the ratios of different dietary components. Examples include the sugar:fiber ratio, the monounsaturated:saturated fat ratio and the omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acid ratio. Each of these tell us something different about the chemical balance as it relates to disease risk of a particular diet.

One of the greatest benefits of looking at these ratios is that they correlate with health/disease risks much more

accurately than do single measures such as the grams of total fat. An example of this point is the "Mediterranean paradox". The paradox is that those eating the traditional Mediterranean diet consume the same percentage of calories from fat as do those eating the US or "Western diet", yet they have a heart disease risk that is far lower.

Although the difference is attributed to several differences between the two diets, the monounsaturated:saturated fat ratio (mono:sat) is the most significant difference.



The mono:sat not only predicts heart disease risk, but it has also been shown to be predictive of type II diabetes risk and to that of several common cancers. For example, a study of over 60,000 women between the ages of 40 and 76 years found that the higher monounsaturated fat versus saturated fat equated to a 50% reduction in breast cancer risk over a 5-year period compared to those with the reverse fat pattern.

The impact of a higher mono:sat on diabetes risk appears to result from improved insulin production and signaling associated with this fat pattern. Recent study has shown that a higher mono:sat causes similar increased production of a GI tract signaling molecule, GLP1 that is the target of some of the newer diabetic drugs. Simple food changes have the same effect in the body as some expensive medications.

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