



This pyramid is a visual representation of Dr. Ornish's dietary recommendations. The foundation of this diet comes from whole, unrefined plant-based foods, as close as possible to their original state. These are whole grains such as whole wheat and brown rice, fresh fruits and vegetables, and legumes (beans, peas, lentils), including soy. These foods provide carbohydrates, protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals and an immense variety of disease-fighting chemicals found only in plant foods (phytochemicals, where phyto = plant), which may help protect us from chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

The bottom two layers of the pyramid, with the addition of 1-2 servings of egg whites and non-fat dairy products, characterize the stricter version of Dr. Ornish diet, meant for people who have heart disease and want to reverse it.

Healthy individuals, who want to prevent disease and achieve or maintain a healthy weight, can add the top layers to the foundation of the pyramid. These include:

* Higher fat-foods, such as nuts and avocados and plant oils low in saturated fat and high in omega-3 fatty acids (e.g. canola oil) can be added occasionally.

* Fish can also be enjoyed in small amounts, especially the varieties rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, mackerel, and halibut. Alternatively, one can consume fish oil capsules, and enjoy the benefits of omega-3 fats (decreased risk of sudden cardiac death, lower triglycerides, reduced inflammation (e.g., arthritis) and lower risk of some cancers), without the contaminants that may be present in fish, such as mercury, PCB's, and dioxin.

* Non-fat dairy products and egg whites can be included to provide excellent-quality protein and important vitamins

* Lean poultry can be added occasionally if a vegetarian diet is not acceptable, as it provides very little additional fat and saturated fat.

Simple carbohydrates such as sugar and white flour are limited in a whole-food diet. These foods are low in fiber, and provide calories that don't make us feel full, and they get absorbed quickly, causing blood sugar to spike and insulin surges that may cause us to gain weight. Equally important, refined carbohydrates are deprived of many of the vitamins, minerals, and health-promoting phytochemicals present in their unrefined versions.

Red meat and trans-fatty acids are excluded. Red meat is rich in artery-clogging saturated fat and has been linked with an increased risk of cancer. Trans-fatty acids have been found to be equivalent, or possibly worse than, saturated fat in increasing the risk for heart disease.

http://www.pMRI.org/lifestyle_program.html#nutrition