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## Title

### ***Adherence to the Mediterranean diet and depressive, anxiety, and stress symptoms in Spanish adolescents: results from the EHDLA study***

## Abstract

Depression and anxiety are prevalent and disabling conditions among adolescents. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between adherence to the Mediterranean diet (MD) and depressive, anxiety, and stress symptoms in adolescents. This cross-sectional study included a sample of 698 adolescent students from a region of Spain (mean age of  $13.9 \pm 1.5$  years; 56.2% girls). Adherence to the MD was evaluated with the Mediterranean Diet Quality Index in children and adolescents (KIDMED). Mental health symptoms were measured with the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21). Logistic regression models were performed, including a wide range of potential confounders. Compared to individuals with low adherence to the MD, those with moderate and high adherence had lower odds of experiencing depressive symptoms (odds ratio [OR] = 0.40, 95% confidence interval [CI] 0.24–0.65 and OR = 0.33, 95% CI 0.20–0.55, respectively), which were statistically significant even after adjustment. No significant associations were found regarding anxiety or stress symptoms. Therefore, according to our results, higher adherence to the MD is inversely related to having depressive symptoms among adolescents, regardless of socioeconomic, anthropometric, and lifestyle factors. Considering the deleterious effects of mental health problems in youths, further research on the role of nonpharmacological strategies for the prevention and treatment of depressive symptoms in adolescence is essential. © 2024, The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany.

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## Authors

Jiménez-López E.; Mesas A.E.; Visier-Alfonso M.E.; Pascual-Morena C.;  
Martínez-Vizcaíno V.; Herrera-Gutiérrez E.; López-Gil J.F.

## Author full names

Jiménez-López, Estela (57193238919); Mesas, Arthur Eumann (22955731300);  
Visier-Alfonso, María Eugenia (57208328815); Pascual-Morena, Carlos  
(57209731186); Martínez-Vizcaíno, Vicente (6602160941); Herrera-Gutiérrez, Eva  
(56850345800); López-Gil, José Francisco (57211391916)

## Author(s) ID

57193238919; 22955731300; 57208328815; 57209731186; 6602160941;  
56850345800; 57211391916

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## Affiliations

Health and Social Research Center, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Santa Teresa Jornet s/n, Cuenca, 16071, Spain; Department of Psychiatry, Hospital Virgen de La Luz, Cuenca, Spain; Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental (CIBERSAM), ISCIII, Madrid, Spain; Postgraduate Program in Public Health, Universidade Estadual de Londrina, Paraná, Londrina, 86057-970, Brazil; Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad Autónoma de Chile, Talca, 1101, Chile; Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Murcia, Espinardo Campus, Murcia, 30100, Spain; One Health Research Group, Universidad de Las Américas, Quito, Ecuador

## Authors with affiliations

Jiménez-López E., Health and Social Research Center, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Santa Teresa Jornet s/n, Cuenca, 16071, Spain, Department of Psychiatry, Hospital Virgen de La Luz, Cuenca, Spain, Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Salud Mental (CIBERSAM), ISCIII, Madrid, Spain; Mesas A.E., Health and Social

---

Research Center, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Santa Teresa Jornet s/n, Cuenca, 16071, Spain, Postgraduate Program in Public Health, Universidade Estadual de Londrina, Paraná, Londrina, 86057-970, Brazil; Visier-Alfonso M.E., Health and Social Research Center, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Santa Teresa Jornet s/n, Cuenca, 16071, Spain; Pascual-Morena C., Health and Social Research Center, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Santa Teresa Jornet s/n, Cuenca, 16071, Spain; Martínez-Vizcaíno V., Health and Social Research Center, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Santa Teresa Jornet s/n, Cuenca, 16071, Spain, Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad Autónoma de Chile, Talca, 1101, Chile; Herrera-Gutiérrez E., Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, University of Murcia, Espinardo Campus, Murcia, 30100, Spain; López-Gil J.F., One Health Research Group, Universidad de Las Américas, Quito, Ecuador

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## **Correspondence Address**

A.E. Mesas; Health and Social Research Center, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca, Santa Teresa Jornet s/n, 16071, Spain; email: arthur.emesas@uclm.es

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