B2 First - Reading Part 5 - Multiple Choice

You are going to read an article about the Mediterranean diet. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Rethinking the Mediterranean Diet

In 2013, UNESCO expanded its recognition of the Mediterranean diet as "intangible cultural heritage". For many people around the Mediterranean Sea, this recognition confirmed that the way their grandparents ate is a source of pride. However, the diet's benefits do not come from the way most people in the region eat today, or from modern "Mediterranean-style" snacks and ready meals. Instead, it is based on a traditional pattern whose benefits have been confirmed in scientific studies.

UNESCO mentions shared knowledge, skills and traditions linked to growing crops, fishing, raising animals and preparing meals, as well as family habits such as sitting down to eat together, so the Mediterranean diet is also a social pattern and not just a list of ingredients. Even so, what matters in the end is what appears on the plate. Researchers use a short questionnaire to measure how closely someone follows this way of eating: the more points you get, the more "Mediterranean" your diet is.

Some foods help you gain points because people are encouraged to eat them regularly. These include olive oil as the main source of fat, plenty of vegetables and fruit, and frequent portions of pulses such as lentils and beans. Fish and seafood appear on the menu several times a week, and a small handful of nuts is recommended on most days. When people eat meat, they are advised to choose poultry or rabbit more often than beef or pork.

Limiting some foods can also help you gain points. These include red and processed meats, butter, margarine and cream. Sugary soft drinks are on the same list, along with commercial pastries. The diet favours mostly plant-based, minimally processed foods and modest amounts of lean meat and seafood, while limiting highly processed "convenience" products.

Evidence for the benefits of this pattern comes from long-term studies, including research in Spain. Scientists there followed thousands of older adults and encouraged some of them to follow a Mediterranean-style diet, while others made more general changes. Over the years, the people in the Mediterranean diet groups experienced fewer cardiovascular events. Other studies have linked this way of eating with a lower risk of some cancers, type 2 diabetes and memory problems.

Despite this, in many Mediterranean countries daily menus now look quite different from the traditional model. Many people assume that foods such as pork, cured ham and cheese are Mediterranean staples that can be eaten without concern. In fact, the Spanish checklist mentioned earlier advises choosing chicken, turkey or rabbit instead of beef, pork, burgers or sausages, and awards a point for eating less than one portion of red or processed meat per day. Processed meats are associated with a higher risk of colorectal cancer and contain a lot of salt, which increases the risk of heart and kidney disease. Most cheeses are also high in salt and saturated fat, so they are meant to appear only occasionally.

Wine is perhaps the most controversial element of the Mediterranean diet. It has a positive reputation because of polyphenols, plant compounds also found in grapes, and some studies have linked polyphenol intake to a lower risk of dying early. However, similar substances are found in olive oil, nuts, fruit and vegetables, without the negative effects of alcohol. Health authorities such as the World Health Organization now emphasise that drinking alcohol can cause health problems and that there is no level of consumption that is completely safe.

It is never too late to move closer to the Mediterranean diet. Nobody needs to follow every point perfectly. Even partial changes, such as eating more vegetables, pulses, fruit, nuts and fish, using olive oil and limiting processed meat, sugary drinks and pastries, may help protect health.

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1 In the first paragraph, the writer suggests that the Mediterranean diet is good for people mainly because

A many modern foods made in Mediterranean countries are naturally healthy.
B it is strongly connected with local customs and identity.
C its traditional form has been carefully tested in research projects.
D it completely avoids all processed foods made in the region.

2 What is the writer's main point in the second paragraph?

A Scientists have simplified the Mediterranean diet too much.
B The Mediterranean diet only works if you follow all the questionnaire points.
C The Mediterranean diet involves shared practices and ways of eating, not just ingredients.
D The way people eat together matters more than the actual food on their plates.

3 Which person most clearly follows several of the recommended habits described in the text?

A Maria, who has a sugary fizzy drink most days and regularly eats shop-bought cakes.
B Leo, who cooks with butter but eats pork and beef only once or twice a month.
C Fatima, who often eats vegetables, beans and fish cooked in olive oil.
D Alex, who has cheese on most days and often adds cream to sauces instead of using meat.

4 What do we learn about the Spanish study mentioned in the text?

A It mainly focused on changes in body weight rather than heart disease.
B It proved that only older adults can benefit from a Mediterranean-style diet.
C Everyone in the study was asked to follow the same diet.
D It found fewer heart problems in groups following a Mediterranean-style diet.

5 Why is wine presented as "perhaps the most controversial element" of the Mediterranean diet?

A Some researchers treat it as the main source of the diet's health benefits.
B It seems to offer some benefits, yet alcohol is also linked to serious health risks.
C It no longer appears on official checklists for the Mediterranean diet.
D Health authorities now recommend wine only for people who already have heart disease.

6 Which of the following best summarises the writer's main message in the final paragraph?

A Only strict followers of the Mediterranean diet can hope to avoid serious disease.
B People should copy exactly how earlier Mediterranean generations used to eat.
C Even limited moves towards a Mediterranean pattern can bring real health benefits.
D Younger adults will benefit more from changing their diet than older adults.

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ANSWER KEY

1 C
The first paragraph says the diet is based on a traditional pattern "confirmed in scientific studies", which supports C. A, B and D are not stated or are contradicted.

2 C
UNESCO's description includes knowledge, skills, traditions and family habits, so the diet is also social, not just ingredients. C matches this. A and B are not mentioned, and D exaggerates the importance of eating together.

3 C
Fatima's habits match several recommendations: vegetables, beans, fish and olive oil. A and D regularly consume foods the text advises limiting. B limits red meat but still cooks with butter, so C matches several recommendations most clearly.

4 D
The Spanish research followed older adults and found that those in the Mediterranean diet groups had fewer cardiovascular events. That is D. The study was not mainly about weight (A), does not claim only older adults benefit in general (B), and did not ask everyone to follow the same diet (C).

5 B
Wine has a good image because of polyphenols, but similar compounds are found in non-alcoholic foods, and alcohol has no completely safe level according to health authorities. So it appears to bring benefits and risks, which makes it controversial. A, C and D contradict the text.

6 C
The final paragraph says nobody needs to follow all the points perfectly and that even partial changes "may help protect health". That clearly supports C. A and B are too strict, and D conflicts with the idea that change is worthwhile for anyone.

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