



Grain Foods Foundation Member Activation Toolkit

Gluten-Free Diet: Imprudent Dietary Advice for the General Population?

Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

September 2012

To GFF Members:

In an effort to provide your brands with additional value from the efforts of the Grain Foods Foundation, we have created a **Member Activation Toolkit**. These are created so that you may re-purpose and share our messages and materials with your customers and in your social communities.

As many of you know, gluten is an issue we're closely monitoring with our efforts largely focused on dispelling the myths about the gluten-free diet, particularly surrounding its use as a fad diet for weight loss. We recently engaged advisory board chairman, Glenn Gaesser, PhD to review the literature on the uses of the gluten-free diet to help correct misperceptions with science; this review was accepted for publication in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. It will appear in the September issue and can be found on the journal's website.

We hope that you will share the following materials with the appropriate people in your organizations to help amplify our messages during this time period.

Thank you.



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Gluten-Free Diet: Imprudent Dietary Advice for the General Population?

Glenn Gaesser, PhD

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Key Messages

- Gluten-free diets are critical for people with celiac disease and gluten intolerance.
- There is no scientific evidence that suggests a gluten-free diet can provide health benefits for the general population.
- Contrary to endorsements from celebrities, following the gluten-free diet is not an effective way to lose weight.
 - There are no studies to support a gluten-free diet leading to weight loss in persons without celiac disease or gluten sensitivity. In fact, many people starting the diet gain weight, since many gluten-free products have added sugars and fats especially a compared to their gluten-containing counterparts.
- For the average healthy consumer, following a gluten-free diet can lead to a host of nutrition challenges like limited dietary fiber and whole grain options in addition to a decrease in folic acid and other nutrients since many gluten-free products are not enriched or fortified. Additionally, limited alternatives, unnecessary cost and variable quality can make the diet unpleasant and unrealistic.
 - Avoiding products with gluten can lead to B vitamin deficiencies, particularly folic acid which is essential for women of child-bearing age. Folic acid is critical for the prevention of neural tube birth defects.
- Gluten itself may provide important health benefits, such as supporting heart, gut and immune system health.
- There is some data to suggest following a gluten-free diet may help improve some conditions, including lupus, type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis.
- There is no definitive data supporting the gluten-free diet as a primary treatment for autism spectrum disorders.

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New Research Debunks Gluten-free Diet for Weight Loss

No Evidence the Gluten-Free Diet Offers Health Benefits or Promotes Weight Loss in the General Population

AUGUST 23, 2012 – WASHINGTON, D.C. – Research published in the latest issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* indicates there is no benefit for the average healthy adult to follow the gluten-free diet. It also debunks the perception that going gluten-free is an effective way to lose weight. The paper, “Gluten-Free Diet: Imprudent Dietary Advice for the General Population?” authored by Arizona State University professor and researcher, Glenn Gaesser, PhD, addresses common misperceptions about the gluten-free diet and explores the scientific support for following it.

The term gluten refers to protein found in the grains wheat, rye and barley. People affected by celiac disease and gluten sensitivity must avoid all foods containing gluten; currently, the gluten-free diet is the only treatment for these conditions. Approximately one percent of Americans have celiac disease and another six percent are estimated to suffer from gluten sensitivity, yet many others believe going gluten-free leads to good health.

Despite purported health claims often seen in the media, Dr. Gaesser found there is no evidence that the gluten-free diet provides benefits to the general population and that gluten itself may, in fact, provide important benefits, such as supporting heart, gut and immune system health. Likewise, he explored the perception that the gluten-free diet is effective for weight loss. After reviewing the existing research on gluten, Dr. Gaesser concluded the gluten-free diet is not an effective weight-loss method. In fact, it frequently leads to weight gain because many gluten-free products contain more added fats and sugars than their gluten-containing counterparts.

“This paper is one of the first to look at the other side of the gluten craze. While the gluten-free diet is an important medical treatment for people with celiac disease and gluten sensitivity, far too many Americans are following the diet for reasons that simply do not make sense,” stated Dr. Gaesser. “Even though it has been endorsed by celebrities for weight loss, let’s face it – they are not the experts on nutrition and health. It’s time to listen to the science.”

These findings run counter to a recent Harris survey of more than 2,000 adults polled about their perceptions and use of the gluten-free diet. Of those participants who followed the diet, half reported doing it to “feel better” and 26% as a “diet for losing weight.” Furthermore, according to a 2011 report from Packaged Facts, the gluten-free product market grew by a rate of 30% each year between 2006 and 2010; reasons for this rapid growth include more accurate testing methods for celiac disease and gluten sensitivity, the perception gluten-free products are healthier in addition to endorsements from celebrities.

This disconnect illustrates the need for stronger efforts to educate the public about reasons for following the gluten-free diet.

For expert nutrition advice, and more information about the gluten-free diet, please visit www.gowiththegrain.org.

About the Grain Foods Foundation

The Grain Foods Foundation, a joint venture of members of the milling, baking and allied industries formed in 2004, is dedicated to advancing the public's understanding of the beneficial role grain-based foods play in the human diet. Directed by a board of trustees, funding for the Foundation is provided through voluntary donations from private grain-based food companies and is supplemented by industry associations. For more information about the Grain Foods Foundation, visit gowiththegrain.org, or find GoWithTheGrain on Facebook and Twitter.

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Blog Post

The Gluten-Free Diet: No Good for Weight Loss

Despite claims so often seen in the media, new research published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* shows there is no benefit for the average, healthy adult to follow the gluten-free diet. While people with celiac disease must use the diet as a medical treatment, it is unnecessary for the rest of us. The research also debunks the myth that the gluten-free diet is an effective way to lose weight.

Authored by researcher and professor at Arizona State University, and Grain Foods Foundation's advisory board chairman, Glenn Gaesser, PhD, uncovered the following in his review of the literature on the gluten-free diet:

- The gluten-free diet is not an effective way to lose weight. In fact, most people who start the gluten-free diet actually gain weight.
- Gluten itself may actually provide important health benefits, such as supporting heart, gut and immune system health.
- There is no scientific evidence that suggests a gluten-free diet can provide health benefits for the general population.

“This paper is one of the first to look at the other side of the gluten craze. While the gluten-free diet is an important medical treatment for people with celiac disease and gluten sensitivity, far too many Americans are following the diet for reasons that simply do not make sense,” stated Dr. Gaesser. “Even though it has been endorsed by celebrities for weight loss, let’s face it – they are not the experts on nutrition and health. It’s time to listen to the science.”

We couldn’t have said it better ourselves. For more information about Dr. Gaesser’s findings, access the paper [here](#).

Sample Facebook Posts & Tweets

Following, please find sample Facebook status updates and Tweets to share in promotion of Dr. Gaesser's paper. Please be sure to **like** and **follow** the hyperlinked pages and handles below so that a tag can be included in your posts. We also encourage you to simply **share** any of GFF's content throughout the month. You can follow our conversation on Facebook: www.facebook.com/gowiththegrain, or on Twitter: www.twitter.com/gowiththegrain and www.twitter.com/grainsRD.

Facebook Posts:

Think a gluten-free diet is for you? Before you ditch the bread [or replace "bread" with a specific product relevant to your brand], read this article in the Journal of the **Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics**: [<http://bit.ly/O3gMqT>]

To be gluten-free or not, that is the question. Dr. Glenn Gaesser has the answer in the Journal of the **Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics**: [<http://bit.ly/O3gMqT>]

Dr. Glenn Gaesser shares his research regarding the gluten-free diet in the Journal of the **Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics**: [<http://bit.ly/O3gMqT>]

Tweets:

Is gluten-free for you? **@ASU** Professor Dr. Glenn Gaesser shares new research w/ **@EatRight**: [<http://bit.ly/O3gMqT>]

Contrary to what **@MileyCyrus** & other celebs believe, a gluten-free diet is not an effective way to lose weight: [<http://bit.ly/O3gMqT>]

According to **@ASU** professor Dr. Glenn Gaesser, #gluten may support heart, gut & immune system health: [<http://bit.ly/O3gMqT>]