



Latest Science Reveals Australians need to Swallow some Grains of Truth about Staple Foods

A new report has revealed that the simplification of complex nutritional messages has resulted in grain foods like bread and pasta becoming the 'scapegoat' for weight gain and bloating, despite ample research to the contrary.

Authorities in the field of nutrition including Professor Manny Noakes, Dr Jane Muir and Dr David Topping joined the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council at CSIRO's Life Sciences Centre in Sydney yesterday to share the latest findings on the benefits of grain foods in the diet.

The research summary report, [What's to Gain from Grains?](#), released this week, highlighted key challenges to Australian nutritional health. These include weight management; Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS); and gut health.

Weight Management

The report showed that an estimated 26% of Australians are limiting grain foods like bread and pasta to help lose weight¹, despite numerous studies confirming that whole grain consumption has a beneficial effect on weight loss.

Professor Manny Noakes highlighted the importance of choosing quality carbohydrates, rather than regarding them as a homogenous category.

"Cutting out highly refined or fat and salt laden carbohydrates is a good idea, but culling high fibre and low GI grain foods at the same time is just throwing the baby out with the bath water," said Professor Noakes.

"Studies show whole grains may have a critically important impact on body composition, particularly in being able to reduce abdominal fat," she concluded.

In line with Australian Dietary Guidelines, consumption of 3 serves a day of cereal foods (mostly wholegrain) is recommended for reduced risk of weight gain².

Wheat Avoidance & IBS

Worryingly, 16% of Australians may be avoiding wheat-based foods, with a significant 35% self-diagnosing¹, yet Coeliac disease affects just 1% of the population³.

According to Dr Jane Muir, specialist in nutrition research of carbohydrates, sufferers of bloating and other digestive complaints – often diagnosed as IBS – can gain relief from their symptoms by following a low FODMAP diet, instead of cutting out all grains.

"People who feel more comfortable on a self-managed exclusion diet are most likely experiencing the benefit from reducing their intake of FODMAPs because gluten-free and wheat free products are

naturally low in these type of carbohydrates, so it's incorrect to blame gluten for their symptoms," said Dr Jane Muir.

"In fact, they may have a specific FODMAPs intolerance," she added.

With one in seven Australians affected by IBS⁴, a low FODMAP diet which includes a variety of grains for health, is proving to be a promising solution, alleviating symptoms in 70% of sufferers⁵. However, Dr Muir does not advocate the long term use of low FODMAP grain products as they can inadvertently reduce natural prebiotics in the gut and is calling for more research into this area.

Additionally, The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) encourages people with concerns about their intolerances to get a formal diagnosis of Coeliac disease or IBS and consult with an Accredited Practising Dietitian to ensure they are consuming all the nutrients they need.

Gut Health

Research from Dr David Topping confirmed that Australia remains in the grip of an Australian fibre paradox: our total fibre intake is high, yet we have the 2nd highest rate of colorectal cancer, killing 80 people every week.

Science is now telling us that fibres may be more effective in combination than individually so there needs to be a greater emphasis on eating not 'more' fibre, but a diverse range. In practice, this means soluble, insoluble and crucially, resistant starch which is low in the Australian diet.

The panel of experts debated the role of grains in the diet with an audience including leading dietitians and nutrition science experts. They challenged alternative health practitioner advice about wheat avoidance, which the panel confirmed was unfounded as well as the popular, but highly restrictive Paleo diet which also excludes entire food groups

The conference concluded with the consensus that carbohydrates and grain foods have been mistakenly blamed for many digestive problems and weight gain. In fact, grain foods, particularly whole grains, are vital for bowel health and assist in weight loss, particularly abdominal fat loss.

Robyn Murray, CEO, Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council emphasised the importance of eating from all food groups, using scientific evidence as the foundation for good health.

"The report and conference provides a vitally important update on the health benefits of grain foods. I hope it helps to diminish some of the misunderstandings of this important staple and encourages healthcare professionals and consumers to choose quality grains as part of their core diet", she said.

References

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