

# Gluten-free craze for general population not supported by science, professor finds

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(Medical Xpress)—There is no benefit for the average healthy adult to follow a gluten-free diet, according to research published by an Arizona State University professor in the September 2012 issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. The study debunks the idea that going gluten-free is an effective way to lose weight.

Glenn Gaesser, professor and director of the [Healthy Lifestyles](#) Research Center in the ASU School of Nutrition and Health Promotion, notes that while gluten-free dieting has gained considerable popularity, there is no published evidence to support such claims. In fact, there are data to suggest that gluten itself may provide some health benefits.

Gaesser wrote "[Gluten-free diet](#): imprudent [dietary advice](#) for the general population?" with Siddhartha Angadi, an ASU doctoral student who graduated in May and now is a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Nursing.

Gluten refers to protein found in the grains wheat, rye and barley. People who have [celiac disease](#) and [gluten sensitivity](#) must avoid all foods containing gluten to avoid abdominal cramping, bloating and diarrhea. About one percent of Americans have celiac disease and another six percent suffer from gluten sensitivity, yet many people believe going gluten-free leads to good health for everyone.

"The market for gluten-free products is expected to reach \$2.6 billion in 2012, and it's an industry based on a false premise," says Gaesser. "It's

become such a popular notion that if you [Google](#) 'gluten-free diet' you'll get more than 4.2 million results. Celebrities endorse it, and there are hundreds of books being published on it.

"But the only reason you would lose weight is that you're cutting calories. It probably won't hurt you to go gluten-free. However, there are indications that gluten may contribute to [blood pressure control](#) and [immune function](#), and may create a healthy composition of colon bacteria."

A gluten-free diet often leads to weight gain because many gluten-free products contain more added fats and sugars than other products, he said.

In submitting his article for peer review by other scientists before publication, Gaesser disclosed that he is the scientific advisory board chairman of the Grain Foods Foundation. As a longtime critic of anti-carbohydrate dieting, he was asked by the foundation to review the scientific literature associated with gluten-free dieting. Afterwards he asked permission to publish the results.

"People might think I had a bias, but I couldn't find any published literature on the health benefits of gluten-free diets for people without celiac disease, gluten sensitivity or autoimmune disorders. There should be some studies, but there are none.

"This paper is one of the first to look at the other side of the gluten craze. Far too many Americans are following the diet for reasons that simply do not make sense. It's time to listen to the science."

Provided by Arizona State University

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