



MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Swapping to whole grain could save Australia billions

Australia could make healthcare savings of more than \$1.4 billion annually in the treatment of heart disease and type 2 diabetes simply by swapping just three serves a day of refined grain foods to whole grains.

The new research, published this week in the international journal *Nutrients*, calculated the savings in healthcare costs and lost productivity associated with reductions in heart disease and type two diabetes from increased consumption of whole grains.

Conducted by investigators from the Grains and Legumes Nutrition Council (GLNC) and an expert from Kuwait University, this is the first research to quantify healthcare savings associated with meeting the Daily Target Intake for whole grains in Australia.

These findings could have substantial implications for policy makers and provide strong evidence for further strengthening messaging regarding whole grains in the national dietary guidelines.

Dr Sara Grafenauer, Accredited Practising Dietitian and Managing Director of GLNC, said conditions such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes are major health issues in Australia.

“Eating three serves of whole grains daily is known to reduce the risk of heart disease by 13 per cent and type 2 diabetes by 32 per cent,” Dr Grafenauer said.

“Given we know diets low in whole grain are the second leading dietary risk factor for disease and death in Australia, the outcomes of this study highlight the need for dietary change. This new finding shows a large potential impact on disease prevention and endorses the need for greater promotion of whole grains in dietary guidelines and front-of-pack labelling tools, such as the Health Star Rating,” she said.

The most recent data shows only 27 per cent of Australians meet the recommended 48g per day Daily Target Intake (DTI). If 50 per cent were to meet the DTI, there could be \$734 million in savings and more than \$1.4 billion if 100 per cent of Australians could reach this target.



As in other parts of the world, Australians fall short of many of the suggested dietary targets included in national dietary guidelines. However, three whole grain servings can be easily achieved by swapping grain foods food rather than adding to the energy density of the diet.

Dr Grafenauer said the good news is many Australians are already halfway there in meeting their whole grain daily target of 48 grams, or three 16 gram serves.

“By focusing on whole grain breakfast cereals and wholemeal bread - the two largest sources of whole grain for Australians - target levels for whole grains could be achieved with minimal change to regular eating habits. A simple swap to a whole grain option could have a powerful impact on individual health, as well as the Australian economy,” Dr Grafenauer said.

Grains and grain-based foods are a key food category in dietary recommendations, as they provide 60 per cent of global energy intake along with a range of important nutrients and dietary fibre.

Since 1979 the Australian Dietary Guidelines have promoted whole grain choices, with the current guidelines pointing to “mostly” whole grain and/or high cereal fibre varieties. Examples suggested in the ADGs are breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, crackers, oats, quinoa and barley, while recommending that two-thirds of total daily grain intake be whole grain.

While the DTI is 48g for Australians over the age of nine, the most recent National Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey (NNPAS) found the median daily whole grain intake was 21g in adults, leaving a gap of 27g per day between current and target consumption.

These results are a timely reminder of the importance of whole grains in a healthy diet in the lead up to [Whole Grain Week](#) on 21-27 June. A range of resources are available to help encourage increased whole grain consumption, including a [video](#) showing how to swap out refined grains for whole grains, an [e-Book](#) with easy-to-make whole grain recipes and a searchable [whole grain product database](#).

Ends

Media resources

- The research paper is available online via [Nutrients journal](#)
- Available via [this Dropbox link](#):
 - PDF copy of the research paper from *Nutrients*
 - Photo of Dr Sara Grafenauer
 - Photos of easy whole grain food options



For more information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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About the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council (GLNC)

As the independent authority on the nutrition and health benefits of grains and legumes, GLNC's mission is to promote grains and legumes nutrition as part of a balanced diet through evidence-based information. Visit the GLNC [website](#) for recipes, factsheets and up-to-date information on the latest evidence around grains and legumes, and connect with GLNC on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram via [@GrainsLegumesNC](#).