

THE TRUTH BEHIND “FAKE” WHITE BREAD

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Grocery stores are now selling breads that look like white bread but are promoted as having all the benefits of whole-grain bread. But do they really? Is this “fake” white bread as healthy as real whole-wheat bread? Following is an overview of the issue.

Valuable fibre

Fibre is naturally present in foods of plant origin. It is not digested by the human body. As it works its way through the digestive system, fibre swells with water, which increases the volume and weight of stool. In this way fibre helps prevent constipation and promotes intestinal health and regularity. This is the best known benefit of fibre.

Grain products such as whole-grain breads and pastas are good sources of fibre because the straight-grade flours used still contain bran, the part of the grain richest in fibre.

What are “fake” white breads?

Unlike whole-grain flours, the bran in the flour used to make white bread is eliminated by the refining process.

Given that it is made with very smooth and pale dough, what kind of whole-grain goodness is there in this “fake” white bread?

There are two types of “fake” white bread. One contains white wheat, a lighter variety than regular wheat that makes paler dough. The fibre can also be bleached (using hydrogen peroxide, for instance), thereby further lightening it.

The second type of “fake” white bread is enriched with concentrated fibre from oats (oat hulls), other grains or pods of legumes. These concentrates are obtained by crushing the grains into extremely fine particles in order to obtain a consistency that is virtually smooth and uniform. These different types of fibre are called “novel fibre.”

We know that the size of the particles determines the laxative effect of the fibre. To help reduce the risk of constipation, the particles must be at least 0.75 mm in diameter and be visible to the eye. Crushing the fibre to make it invisible considerably reduces its effect on the intestinal tract. Result:

even though the fibre content listed in the nutritional facts may be similar to that in whole-grain breads, “fake” white bread does not appear to have as beneficial an impact on intestinal regularity.

So, let’s feast on the great taste of true whole-grain breads that contain real and visible oat bran as well as whole-wheat or stone-milled flour!

Remember...

Fibre needs water to do its job in the intestinal tract, so make sure you drink plenty of it!

THE FIBRE CONTENT OF FOOD ITEMS MUST BE LISTED IN THE NUTRITION FACTS.

Sources of fibre:

- Legumes
- Fruits and vegetables
- Nuts and grains
- Whole-grain products

☒ **FOR MORE INFORMATION** Health Canada, www.hc-sc.gc.ca *Whole Grains – Get the facts* in Food and Nutrition



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HEALTH BULLETIN

Assistance Program



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PREVENTION

BACK PAIN? KEEP MOVING!

Dominique Gilbert, Physiotherapist

More than 80% of adults will suffer back pain at least once in their lifetime, and for the majority, the pain will be recurring or chronic. Medical data does not provide any explanations for the cause of this back pain or its persistence. However, studies have identified certain risk factors, which include smoking, stationary workstations and inactivity.

Over the past 50 years, efforts to make the workplace more ergonomic have definitely improved workers’ comfort; however, they have not had a real impact on the severity of back injuries. Recent studies have shown a link between the intensity of work-related physical activity and the development of back pain. In fact, the majority of the injuries occur among people doing sedentary and heavy work. For people in sedentary occupations, the problems affect the lumbar discs, which are the cushions between the vertebrae. People whose work requires them to lift heavy loads in awkward positions suffer from arthritis along the lumbar spine. However, people whose work includes a variety of requirements and moderate physical exertion are less likely to suffer from back pain and, if they do, episodes are much shorter. In brief, back pain frequency and duration are greater among people whose jobs require either excessive or insufficient physical effort.

PREVENTING LOWER-BACK PAIN

How do you achieve a healthy balance between excessive physical strain and an exercise program that is adequate to prevent back pain? Research suggests following the guidelines below:

- 1. Focus on endurance** rather than muscular strength, as endurance is more effective than strength in preventing injury.
- 2. Strengthen your abdominal muscles** in order to stabilize your lumbar spine. An effective exercise that uses the abdominal and trunk-extensor muscles: support your body on your elbows and toes; hold your trunk in neutral position for 10 seconds.
- 3. Aim to improve your cardiovascular health:** people who have good levels of aerobic fitness have been shown to have fewer back injuries.
- 4. Exercise daily:** in order to develop muscular endurance, a short exercise program daily is more advisable than a long program three times a week.
- 5. Adapt your routine** to your own fitness level: there are no universal programs. Identify your strengths and weaknesses so that you can work on your weak areas more effectively.
- 6. Work all muscle groups:** avoid focusing only on the “fashionable muscles.”
- 7. Be patient.** It will take at least three months to notice any improvements in function or pain levels. If you give up, you will lose the beneficial effects quickly... and risk a relapse.
- 8. Incorporate healthy work habits:**
 - Vary your position; diversify techniques used to lift objects; if you work sitting down, stand up for a short while every half hour.
 - Avoid being immobile: move every 10 minutes...you don’t have to stand up, just move!
 - If you have been sitting for an hour or more, stretch for two or three minutes before bending or handling heavy loads.



Your back health depends on you alone!

☒ **FOR MORE INFORMATION** Back.com: www.back.com

Assistance Program

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MEDICAL CONDITIONS

WHAT IS MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS?

Josée Poirier, Nurse, BSc, MScN, Multiple Sclerosis Clinic, CHUM

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the most common neurological disease affecting young adults in North America. Although it is more often diagnosed in people in their 20s, it can affect younger children, teenagers and people over 55. Women are three times more likely than men to be diagnosed with the disease.

Multiple sclerosis affects the central nervous system, which includes the brain, the cerebellum, the brain stem and the spinal cord. The disease attacks and damages the myelin sheath that protects the neurons. This leads to demyelination and the early loss of nerve fibres. The disease is characterized by inflammation and the formation of lesions that scar, harden and form plaques; hence the name “multiple sclerosis” (sclerosis: abnormal hardening of body tissue).

Between 55,000 and 75,000 Canadians have multiple sclerosis

Although there are many hypotheses, the real cause of multiple sclerosis is still unknown and a cure has yet to be found. We now know that, given the geographic position of the country, Canadians living with multiple sclerosis lack vitamin D. As a result, it is recommended that patients take vitamin D.

Multiple sclerosis presents with a multitude of symptoms that vary depending on the location of the lesions, from person to person and in some cases in the same patient depending on the progression of the disease.

The main symptoms

The most common symptoms are:

- Sensory impairment: tingling, numbness, burning sensations
- Visual impairment: double vision, optic neuritis, loss of visual acuity with painful eye movement
- Gait and balance difficulties
- Fatigue, etc.

There are many forms of MS, the most common being relapsing-remitting MS, which is characterized by episodes of illness followed by periods of remission. Episodes are characterized by the appearance of a new symptom or the significant exacerbation of an existing one and last more than 24 hours non-stop with no fever or infection. Episodes vary in duration but generally last between three and 12 weeks. Some episodes are mild and do not prevent the patient from working. Others may be more severe and in some cases require the taking of corticosteroids, rehabilitation and stoppage of work. Because the disease is unpredictable, it is impossible to determine when



the next episode will occur and how it will manifest.

Encouraging progress

Fortunately, new drugs have appeared on the market in the past decade or so. These drugs decrease the frequency, duration and severity of episodes and reduce the number of lesions detected by magnetic resonance. They stabilize the patient's condition by slowing the progression of the disease. All these drugs are injectable. Oral tablets will be available in less than a year to help patients manage the disease. Science is progressing slowly, but one day researchers will find the cause of multiple sclerosis and help cure it.

✉ **FOR MORE INFORMATION**
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada
<http://mssociety.ca>

CHILDCARE

TEEN SLEEP ISSUES: A TIRESOME PROBLEM

Tuong Minh Nguyen, MD

Almost half of teenagers feel drowsy during the day, specifically because they are not getting enough sleep. They try to make up for this shortfall by waking up later on weekends. This sleeping in perpetuates the image of teenagers who are constantly complaining they are too tired to get up even though it's almost noon!

This situation can be attributed to various factors, including:

- A change in habits
- Going to bed later
- Early morning classes
- A heavier workload at school
- Social, sports and recreational activities
- Part-time jobs
- Relative loss of parental influence and a growing sense of independence
- Peer pressure

Like younger children, teenagers need 9 to 10 hours of sleep a night.

Studies have shown that teenagers don't feel the effects of sleep deprivation as much as younger children do.



However, even though teens can stay awake up to four hours past their normal bedtime, both age groups need the same amount of sleep. One or two nights of restful sleep cannot make up for extended periods of insufficient slumber; they will need up to a week of full nights' sleep.

Although it has not been well documented in medical literature, teenagers' sleep patterns could also be attributed to adjustments to their internal biological clock. A lack of sleep can cause the following in teenagers:

- Fatigue
- Decreased concentration
- Difficulty registering and storing new knowledge in long- and short-term memory
- Changes in brain function, such as judgment and the ability to interact well with those around them

Lack of sleep is not the only reason why your teenager is grumpy; his/her brain is also lacking sleep. In addition, medical literature shows that students who are less tired perform better.

Sleep disorders

Some sleep disorders may be linked to specific medical conditions. It is

recommended that teenagers be taken to see a doctor if:

- They snore a lot and the parents feel they are struggling to breathe at night;
- They are unusually and constantly sad or anxious;
- Lack of sleep prevents them from functioning normally in their studies or social life.

Restful sleep

For restful sleep, teens should:

- Go to sleep at the same time every night;
- Exercise regularly but not in the evening;
- Avoid coffee, tea and soft drinks in the afternoon;
- Most importantly, not take substances such as alcohol and herbal teas to help go to sleep, as they can be addictive.

Lastly, ask teens (and parents can also ask themselves), do you really need to get everything done in a day? Sleep usually suffers if you try to do everything in one day. Think about it.

✉ **FOR MORE INFORMATION**
Canadian Association for Adolescent Health:
www.acsa-caah.ca

PHARMACIST'S CORNER

WARNING: GRAPEFRUIT AND DRUGS

Health Canada

Grapefruit contains substances that prevent the body from absorbing and breaking down certain medications. These substances increase the concentration of the drug in the bloodstream and may cause serious, and in some cases fatal, unexpected adverse reactions. In most cases, the effect of the drug increases; it rarely decreases.

Many drugs are likely to interact with grapefruit, especially those used to treat:

- Cancer
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol levels
- Depression and anxiety
- Heart disease
- Certain infections
- Organ transplant rejection
- Convulsions
- Psychotic problems, etc.

A single glass of grapefruit juice is enough to increase the concentration of the medication in the blood, and effects can last three or more days. Even if you drink the juice in the morning and take your medication at bedtime, the level of the drug in your bloodstream could still be affected.

Tangelos, pomelos and Seville oranges can have an effect similar to grapefruit. Do not eat these fruits or drink their juice if you take medications regularly.

✉ **FOR MORE INFORMATION**
Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca
Enter *grapefruit* in the search tool.