

GLUTEN FREE



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Is it too good to be true? In separate projects, Australian scientists claim to have developed non-pharmaceutical treatments for gluten intolerance and type 2 diabetes.

In the first project, Australian biopharmaceutical company Glutagen has used caricain, a naturally-derived enzyme from the papaya fruit, to improve gluten digestion.

Glutagen's lead researcher, Professor Hugh J Cornell, said clinical studies showed that the oral anti-gluten enzyme supplement, GluteGuard, was able to significantly protect people with gluten intolerance from adverse symptoms.

The tablet is enterically coated, allowing it to pass through the stomach undigested and activate in the gut. Without the coating, the tablet would dissolve in the stomach and the caricain enzyme would be inactivated by the acid environment.

"Availability of a preventive enzyme supplement like GluteGuard will likely add to the quality of life and well-being of gluten intolerant people, especially those who have difficulty in strictly adhering to a gluten-free diet," Professor Cornell said.

One in 10 Australian adults are estimated to be avoiding or limiting their consumption of wheat-based products, with gluten sensitivity blamed for a wide range of symptoms from abdominal pain and bloating to general malaise and tiredness.

In the second project, Melbourne-based nutrition specialist Omni Innovation says it has developed a pre-meal shake that reduces the spikes in blood sugar levels after a high GI meal, and improves overall glycaemic control (HbA1c) in the long-term.

GlucoControl uses a blend of proteins from whey and milk, and vegetable fibre extracts, to slow the digestion of a meal, with slower emptying of stomach contents, and slower conversion of carbohydrates to sugars.

Gastroenterologist Dr Chris Rayner, who was involved in the study, said the pre-meal drink would appeal to the broad community of people living with type 2 diabetes.

"Better control of blood glucose, as reflected not only in HbA1c but also in the rise in blood glucose after meals, helps prevent or delay the serious complications that can develop in type 2 diabetes, which include vision impairment, vascular damage, and even amputations," Dr Rayner said.

Both companies advise people to seek advice from their GP before using the products.

Maria Hawthorne

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