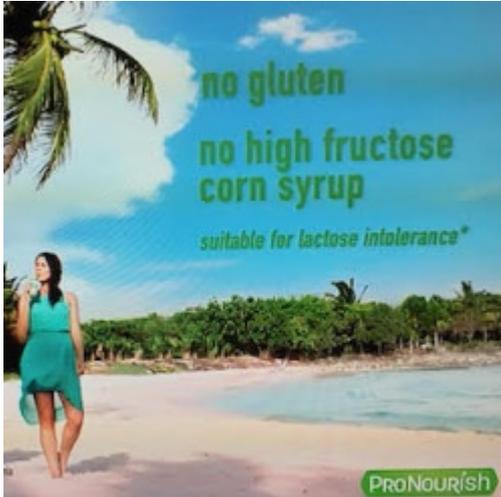


Low FODMAP Diet: A Fad Worth Following?



By Alex Berezow — January 12, 2017



Credit: Nestlé

Food and nutrition companies always capitalize on whatever fad diets are currently in fashion to shamelessly promote their products. Science is of secondary concern, if it's a concern at all. For instance, Centrum Silver is running an advertisement that brags about its (utterly worthless) multivitamins being [gluten- and GMO-free](#) [1].

Nestlé wants in on the action, too. This company is playing a TV commercial for [ProNourish](#) [2], a nutritional drink. As one might expect, the company eagerly and unscientifically boasts about the product's lack of gluten and high-fructose corn syrup*. (See upper-left image.) But these platitudes are not what made the commercial interesting.

What was truly eye-catching was this:



Low in FODMAPs. What are those?

The Low FODMAP Diet

FODMAP ^[3] is an acronym for the unwieldy term "Fermentable, Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides, And Polyols." In other words, FODMAPs are sugars and carbohydrates that are poorly absorbed by the digestive system, leaving them to serve as food for intestinal bacteria. Because gas is a waste product of bacterial fermentation, FODMAPs may serve as the fuel that triggers symptoms -- such as pain, bloating, and flatulence -- in people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). (See the video at the top of this page for a great explainer on the potential causes of IBS.)

A [study](#) ^[4] published in the journal *Gastroenterology* in 2014 compared 30 IBS patients with eight controls. Each volunteer was randomly and unknowingly assigned to a low FODMAP diet or a typical Australian diet for three weeks, given a break for three weeks, and then assigned the other diet for three weeks. (This experimental design is referred to as a controlled, single-blind, cross-over.) The researchers found that the low FODMAP diet successfully reduced symptoms of IBS in those who suffered from it.

So, unlike most dieting fads, the low FODMAP diet may actually work for people who suffer from IBS. And because Nestlé's internet ad for [ProNourish](#) ^[5] targets people with "digestive sensitivities," it appears the company is addressing a very real health need with a product that can be justified with scientific evidence.

That is certainly not common in the nutrition industry.

**Avoiding gluten is only necessary for people who have Celiac disease or an allergy to gluten. High-fructose corn syrup is [very similar to honey](#) [6], though people with IBS may want to avoid fructose. ([Fructose malabsorption](#) [7] might be a cause of IBS.)*

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/01/12/low-fodmap-diet-fad-worth-following-10730>

Links

[1] <http://acsh.org/news/2016/12/06/pfizers-centrum-silver-multivitamins-contain-pesticide-paint-glass-10544>

[2] <http://www.nestlenutritionstore.com/products/ProNour/ProNourish.html#.WHg69bYrKb8>

[3] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FODMAP>

[4] [http://www.gastrojournal.org/article/S0016-5085\(13\)01407-8/abstract](http://www.gastrojournal.org/article/S0016-5085(13)01407-8/abstract)

[5] <http://www.nestlenutritionstore.com/products/ProNour/ProNourish.html#.WHhspbYrKCQ>

[6] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2016/12/06/honey-please-pass-high-fructose-corn-syrup-10537>

[7] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26059250>