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Heart-Healthy Pasta? 'Super Spaghetti' Just Might Be

Scientists Say Pasta Made With Barley Flour Could Lower Risk of Heart Disease

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WebMD Health News

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Sept. 16, 2011 -- It's being called "super spaghetti."

Scientists in Italy and Spain say they have developed a new type of pasta made with barley flour that may reduce the risk of [heart disease](#) for lovers of spaghetti and other wheat-based noodles.

Barley, a hardy cereal famous for giving beer its characteristic strength and flavor, is an excellent source of fiber, antioxidants, and [vitamin E](#). It has been gaining popularity as an ingredient in so-called "functional foods" that are supplemented with healthy additives.

Functional foods are billed as healthier products. According to the American Chemical Society, they've become popular around the world among health-conscious diners, creating a new industry expected to be worth more than \$176 billion by 2013.

According to Vito Verardo, PhD, of the University of Bologna in Italy, and Ana Maria Gomez-Caravaca, PhD, of the University of Granada in Spain, it may not be long before people see packages of pasta labeled with the phrases "may reduce the risk of [heart disease](#)" and "good source of [dietary fiber](#)" because of the barley.

'Functional' Foods Gain Popularity

In creating the new pasta, scientists first had to determine whether they could make spaghetti a "functional food" by using barley to add fiber and antioxidants. So, they developed barley flour containing the most nutritious part of the grain.

As they had hoped, the researchers say spaghetti made with barley flour had more fiber and antioxidant activity than traditional spaghetti made with semolina -- a type of wheat flour.

They say that adding gluten to the barley flour improved the cooking quality of the pasta, at the expense of its antioxidant power.

The researchers write that barley spaghetti has the adequate requirements of the FDA to warrant making health claims on the package.

The ingredients in barley, such as the dietary fiber, antioxidants, and vitamin E, are known to help peoples' hearts and digestive tracts.

The scientists' report is published in the American Chemical Society's *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

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