



Some say reach Lower

Latest food claims look for a gut reaction

By **CHERYL TRUMAN**
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It's not all in your head. These days, it's all in your gut.

Twenty years ago, oat bran was the food that was going to put us all into a state of high-fiber, clear-hearted bliss.

Now the food trend is lower in the body. You want to be healthy in 2008? Ponder your intestines.

Dannon sells Activia yogurt, which promotes bathroom regularity. It also hawks mini-smoothies called DanActive, that claim to boost immunity. You didn't know? Much of your immunity lies in the foot after foot of epithelial cells lining your intestines — a kind of spongy exchange center where nutrients are absorbed and wastes are expelled.

Kraft sells "probiotic" cheese and cottage cheese. Planters has introduced a "digestive health mix" that includes "prebiotic" high-fiber items including granola, almonds and

dried cherries.

There's even a new book, "Health Begins in the Colon" (Ulysses Press, \$19.99) by Edward Group. Says Group of his epiphanic moment: "I never hear anything in the medical community about the intestinal tract."

Group says part of our problem, not to put too fine a point on it, is transit time: how long it takes for what you ingest to do its body business and exit you. People in good health should have a bowel movement two or three times a day, Group says. An ideal transit time for food to get in, break down and be on its way? Ten to 18 hours.

To get an idea of how the intestines work, Group says, consider mixing up everything you eat and drink in a day and smearing it on your skin: After a few hours, it's going to get pretty vile.

That's the other part of the intestinal-health equation: urging the toxins in our food to move on out. Or, with Group's dietary

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The soluble fiber in oatmeal might help lower levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol. **TOP:** Almonds, in moderate amounts, are considered a heart-healthy food.

Diet is an important consideration

...ations, never
...ing them in the first place.
He doesn't like laxatives
— which he says are drugs
— or even psyllium, which he
says doesn't repair or cleanse
the colon but instead scrapes
the intestinal walls a little. He
prefers an oxygen-based colon
cleanse followed by a diet low
in junk and high in fruit.

Then there's Dannon's
method of colon overhaul.

Dannon has touted the
health benefits of its yogurt
as far back as the iconic 1970s
commercials that promoted
the long-lived yogurt-eating
Russian Georgians. Now,
Dannon has added Activia
and DanActive as specialty
products that promote
intestinal fortitude from the
dairy case.

Where does Activia sell
best? Dannon spokesman
Michael Neuwirth isn't saying,
although he acknowledges
that an excretion-encouraging
yogurt tends to sell better
in regions of the country
where poor eating habits
predominate.

Dannon's biotically charged
yogurts are lifestyle products
that produce a benefit — but
only if you continue taking
them.

"You have to consume these
products regularly," Neuwirth
said. "It's not an on-off
switch."

Whether a product is on or
off, of course, depends on the
consumer. And that's where
food fads, as much fashion as
science, start.

Oat bran's fall from grace

Dr. James Anderson, of the
University of Kentucky, saw
the boom and bust of his
favored grain 20 years ago.



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Some "probiotic" cheeses, as well as cottage cheese, are
on the market now.

What's vexing is that some
of the food fads eventually
are confirmed by additional
research. Anderson says
additional studies have proved
that he was right after all: Oat
bran is good for your heart.
Being right might not bring
back the oat bran-enhanced
tortilla chip, but Anderson is
gratified nonetheless.

Regular consumption of
oats changes the intake of
cholesterol in the blood.

"The Healing Power of Whole
Foods" (HealthWays Nutrition,
\$24.95), says that natural
health products have a part
in a balanced diet but that
consumers have to be wary
of putting all parts of diet
and supplementation in the
context of a thoughtful, varied
eating plan.

"All of these things are
important, but when people
hear a little bit and just do one
thing and don't look at their



Book it

"Health Begins in the Colon"
(Ulysses Press, \$19.99), by
Edward Group, focuses on the
importance of the colon in a
person's health.

and limits his consumption
of even heart-healthy foods
such as almonds. But even Dr.
Oat Bran has a sweet tooth: He
likes anti-oxidant-rich dark
chocolate, and sometimes he
will pop a few pieces of milk
chocolate, too.

Even the man who saw
his star rise and fall and rise
again on oat bran research
finds reason to listen to some
research studies on other
foods: "I was really pleased
with the emerging research on
dark chocolate."