



**American Dietetic Association**  
www.eatright.org | *Your link to nutrition and health<sup>SM</sup>*

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Dear Dr. Schneeman:

We are pleased to respond to questions raised on September 11, 2007, at the Food and Drug Administration's Hearing on Food Labeling: Use of Symbols to Communicate Nutrition Information, Consideration of Consumer Studies, and Nutritional Criteria. Following a presentation by Mary Hager, PhD, RD, FADA, the American Dietetic Association's Director of Regulatory Affairs, FDA officials asked how ADA decides to endorse a program or a product. Dr. Hager responded accurately that ADA does not endorse particular brands or products. We are happy to provide this additional information about ADA's programs, policies and practices.

ADA has long had an express policy that it does not endorse specific goods or products. We consider "endorsement" to be giving or declaring public approval of a product, or recommending a specific product by brand or name. You will never see a statement in advertising or promotional materials that ADA recommends "Brand X" or approves "Brand Y". Any agreements to which ADA is a party expressly prohibit such use of the ADA name or marks. This has been ADA's policy many years, and it is not likely to change.

On the other hand, ADA has lent its name to support or promote a nutritional principle or a statement of scientific nutrition fact. In three cases over the past few years, ADA permitted its name and logo to be applied to the packaging of a particular product, but *only* in connection with a factual or educational premise. In the case of Barilla Pasta, for example, the food manufacturer was permitted to use two on-packaging messages, one on each side of the package:

*A message from the American Dietetic Association*

*The key to healthy eating and weight control is to consume a variety of complex carbohydrates along with moderate amounts of protein and unsaturated fats. Carbohydrates are the brain's and body's preferred fuel and should make up about half of total daily calories. Complex carbohydrates like pasta and other grain products, vegetables and beans also provide additional nutrients including vitamins, minerals and protein. Weight-loss diets that eliminate whole categories of foods can be detrimental to your health over the long term.*

[and]

*Pasta and other complex carbohydrates are the preferred fuel for the brain and body. A nutrition message from the American Dietetic Association.*

Similarly, ADA permitted Hunt's Foods to apply the following message to its packaging:

*According to the American Dietetic Association, lycopene as well as vitamins A and C are naturally found in tomatoes. For more information on the health benefits of tomatoes, go to [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).*

Finally, ADA's first experience with on-package messaging, nearly ten years ago, was its arrangement with Gerber Baby Foods, when it permitted the following to appear on Gerber products:

*According to the American Dietetic Association, adequate iron in the infant diet is important for strong blood. When introducing solids, try iron-fortified cereals, followed by a variety of pureed vegetables and fruits. For more information about feeding infants and toddlers, visit the ADA at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).*

At this time, no food product bears any statements approved by ADA.

To deal with programs in which ADA will permit its name and nutrition messages to be used on product packaging, such as these just described, ADA has formulated its "On-Package Consumer Nutrition Messages Policy", which was adopted in April 2002 and remains in effect today. That policy, which is attached to this letter as Attachment 1, is premised upon and articulates ADA's philosophy of non-endorsement, its adherence to the mission to provide credible, scientifically based messages to the public, and its process of review and approval that must be followed before ADA's name, or any messages, can be utilized.

Similarly, but separate from the on-package initiatives, ADA has also collaborated occasionally with other organizations or companies to formulate and distribute educational or informational messages designed to serve and inform the public. With the National Dairy Council, for instance, ADA joined in supporting a "3-A-Day of Dairy" campaign to demonstrate the value of consuming three servings of dairy products each day. Another example is ADA's collaboration with ConAgra to create a joint website that provided informational material on how to ensure Home Food Safety.

In addressing this type of situation, ADA developed a second set of guidelines, entitled "ADA's Guidelines for Corporate Relations Sponsors", which is attached as Attachment 2. This document, which appears as part of the "Corporate Relations Sponsorship" section on ADA's website, sets the standards for ADA's interactions with corporate or industry entities. Like the On-Package Consumer Nutrition Messages Policy, these guidelines re-state and re-affirm the consistent principles upon which ADA bases its participation in any of its promotional or

cooperative enterprises. The same statements and same themes appear in both sets of guidelines because they are fundamental to ADA's mission and philosophy. In addition, this second set of guidelines also makes clear that ADA will enter into such relationships only with companies that will help ADA fulfill its mission and purpose, fit within ADA's strategic goals, and operate in conformance with ADA positions, policies and philosophies

In none of these cases, however, has ADA recommended or promoted the specific products of its co-collaborator. Unlike other organizations, ADA has no program or mechanism by which it purports to certify, approve, or lend its name or seal to the qualities of a particular branded product. Other organizations may issue seals of approval, or may promote a product as meeting certain established standards or criteria, but that is not something that ADA does. Very simply, ADA does not endorse or certify food products.

ADA has been diligent in adhering to both sets of guidelines as we see them in the context of our responsibility to our members and to the public. The FDA's renewed attention to the subject of labeling, of course, provides us with an excellent opportunity to review our guidelines on an ongoing basis, and to confirm our continued compliance with the federal law and regulations relating to labeling. We are confident that ADA and FDA are of the same mind in supporting truthful, complete, and non-misleading messages that will assist consumers in making informed decision to build a healthy diet.

We trust that these comments are responsive to the inquiries that your representatives posed to Dr. Hager as to how ADA decides with which companies it will collaborate and which messages it will support. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Hager or me at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Ronald S. Moen  
Chief Executive Officer

RSM:JCB:mlo

Attachments: On-Package Consumer Nutrition Messages Policy  
Guidelines for Corporate Sponsors"

cc: Connie Diekman  
Stephanie Patrick  
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