Massive Cheerios Recall – General Mills Has Been Selling "Gluten-free" Cereal Contaminated with Gluten

General Mills' decision to produce certified gluten-free Cheerios delighted the nearly 30% of consumers who avoid gluten until a recall of 1.8 million boxes of Cheerios and Honey Nut Cheerios was announced earlier this week.

According to the company, their Lodi, California facility lost rail service for four days in July. To continue production, gluten-free oat flour was delivered by trucks. Somehow, this change in procedure resulted in a mix-up and wheat flour was mistakenly used.

The recall includes Cheerios cereal with the following "better if used by" dated codes:

HONEY NUT CHEERIOS

- 12JUL2016LD
- 13JUL2016LD
- 14JUL2016LD
- 15JUL2016LD
- 16JUL2016LD
- 17JUL2016LD
- 18JUL2016LD
- 19JUL2016LD
- 20JUL2016LD
- 21JUL2016LD
- 22JUL2016LD
- 23JUL2016LD
- 24JUL2016LD

- 25JUL2016LD

YELLOW BOX CHEERIOS

- 14JUL2016LD
- 15JUL2016LD
- 16JUL2016LD
- 17JUL2016LD

If you purchased one of these boxes, you can contact General Mills at 1-800-775-8370.

It is important to note that the cereal is perfectly safe to eat if you do not have celiac disease, a gluten intolerance, or a gluten sensitivity.

General Mills has a reputation as a family-friendly, trustworthy brand, and loss of faith in their products could have major implications for their recent organic acquisitions like Annie’s Homegrown.

The Implications

After the hype surrounding the gluten-free certification of Cheerios, General Mills is dealing with this major snafu in the only way they can – abject apologies. Calling this an isolated incident, the company acknowledges the reports of illnesses from the contaminated boxes and are encouraging customers to call in and register their ire. It remains to be seen what other tactics will be taken.

The company cites the process of switching to gluten-free materials as a factor in the mistake, but with such big changes affecting the brand, the lack of, or inefficiency of early testing, is concerning. This was an expensive mistake for General Mills that causes one to wonder if the public’s trust in their 74-year-old cereal is worth stricter attention to product sourcing.

Currently, companies submit their own gluten-free certification testing to the FDA to qualify for the label. Individuals are responsible for reporting illness and labeling concerns, meaning that despite having an entire government agency responsible for regulating food quality, the public is left largely responsible for policing their own food safety.

Being Careful Is More Important Than Ever

FDA regulations state that any product labeled gluten-free can contain up to 20 parts gluten per million. Whole grain oats by themselves are gluten free, although cross contamination in transport with other grains like wheat and barley has often prevented oats and other gluten-free grains from being labeled gluten free. These two facts taken together can be discouraging. When foods that are verified gluten-free are still able to contain gluten and foods that are naturally gluten-free cannot be isolated from gluten grains, where does that leave the consumer?

Looking Forward

Gluten intolerance and celiac disease are on the rise due to the way we process wheat, the amount of sugar in our diet, and the imbalance in our guts. It can be difficult to transition to a gluten-free diet after eating the standard American diet. Many people find themselves desperately trying to replace their favorite foods with gluten free alternatives – replacing one processed food with another. Choosing whole foods like veggies and fruits in place of conventional treats can actually begin to heal the damage that gluten has done to the gut, and it has the added benefit of reducing the likelihood the failed corporate testing will leave you sick and disillusioned.

Recommended Reading:

- *Gluten Candida Leaky Gut Syndrome and Autoimmune Diseases*
- *Foods To Avoid With Gluten Intolerance or Celiac Disease*
- *Easy Gluten Free Pancake Recipe*

Sources:

- *Gluten Free Cheerios Recall Information* – Cheerios
- *General Mills Just Recalled Millions of Boxes of Cheerios* – Grub Street
- *Persistence Gives U.S Gluten Free Cheerios* – General Mills
- *The Reasons Gluten Intolerance And Celiac Disease Are On The Rise* – Organic Lifestyle Magazine