



**GLUTEN
INTOLERANCE
GROUP**



Beauty/Body Products and Supplements

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People living gluten-free must monitor anything that is ingested for gluten. Since any gluten taken internally can cause adverse reactions, not only foods but also supplements and oral care products must be evaluated. But what about topical beauty aids? Does your shampoo, body lotion, or make-up have to be gluten-free?

The Facts

1. Gluten reactions occur when gluten is ingested and the digestive tract is exposed to it.
2. Gluten is a protein too large to be absorbed through the skin.
3. Substances absorbed through the skin do not have direct access to the gastrointestinal system.
4. Skin reactions to gluten are most likely an allergic reaction and not related to celiac disease.

Beauty Aids

Wheat and oat products are common additives in beauty products including body and facial scrubs, shampoos, and cosmetics such as lipsticks. These can be sources of fiber, such as coarse-grain products (oats and bran) used to aid in exfoliation. They can also be used as hydrating agents (e.g. wheat germ oil) and color sources in lipsticks.

The true content of gluten in cosmetics is not clear, however the amount of gluten-containing grains used in most products is insignificant and it would take *INGESTION* of unusually large amounts to cause a gluten-related reaction because of celiac disease, dermatitis herpetiformis or non-celiac gluten sensitivity. If you are not ingesting these products, they should not present a problem with a gluten-reaction unless you also have an allergic reaction to gluten. If you have an allergic reaction to wheat or oats, you may want to avoid items with these ingredients. Hypoallergenic does not necessarily mean that use of these products will not cause you to have a reaction. Various companies are producing gluten-free cosmetics, for individuals preferring this option.

Supplements

Always monitor medications as well as supplement use. Gluten can be found in supplements, especially herbal supplements and vitamin/mineral supplements. Gluten in prescription medication is less common but still should be thoroughly investigated before using medications on a regular basis.

Tips

To avoid possible reaction to any potentially irritating ingredients, it is best not to use products on skin with open sores.

If you have a skin reaction to any topical products, stop using them immediately.

Be sure not to swallow shampoos, rinses, conditioners or body wash products. Watch these products as well as bath paints for children.

In natural and herbal supplements, gluten can be in the form of added grains, grain grasses, or ingredients derived from these grains. Always read the label on supplements! In main-stream over-the-counter and prescription medications and supplements, if it contains gluten, it is from the inert (inactive) ingredients such as the fillers and binders.

Some supplements are certified gluten-free by third party organizations; if you see a 3rd party certification/logo on a product, the product should be safe to consume. Since supplements are covered by the FDA gluten-free labeling regulation, any supplement labeled “gluten-free” should be safe to consume. Prescription and over the counter medications are not covered by the FDA gluten-free labeling regulation.

Note: If the medication is in the form of an inhalant, injectable, patch, or IV, gluten is not routinely included in these types of products. Elixirs generally do not contain gluten. If it is a nutritional feeding product, pill or capsule, gluten could be a fiber or binding agent and the product must be carefully investigated. A great resource is www.glutenfreedrugs.com. Here you can find hundreds of medications and their gluten-free status.

A Word about Grasses and Sprouted Grains:

Grasses (wheat grass, barley grass, etc.) could be safely included in gluten-free products if the grass is harvested during the proper time, and handled to prevent contamination during processing. Glutens are storage proteins found in the seed (or grain) of wheat, rye and barley. When the seed begins to grow into a grass, the storage proteins stay in the seed and the grass itself does not contain gluten. However, it can be a challenge to separate the grass from any gluten-containing seed remnants while also harvesting the grass before it has a chance to grow new seeds.

If you are concerned about gluten from grasses, use products made with alfalfa grass instead of wheat or barley grass.

Sprouted grains should be evaluated for gluten just as other grains are. The sprouting process does not convert a gluten-containing grain into a product safe for inclusion in a gluten-free diet. There are products, however, that contain gluten-free grains which have been sprouted.

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Other helpful information is available at www.GLUTEN.org.

Advances in celiac disease are fast-paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our website for updated documents.

This information should not be used to diagnose or treat gluten-related disorders or other medical conditions. For questions about these conditions consult your healthcare team when considering this information.

Please consider your local GIG Branch as another resource.

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The Mission of the Gluten Intolerance Group is to empower the gluten-free community through consumer support, advocacy, and education.

To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our website or call the office at 253-833-6655.