





# food for thought

## gluten-free facials and skin care

### THEY MAY SOUND LIKE RATHER SOBERING

names: Cyclodextrin, Avena Sativa, Triticum Vulgare Starch, and for some, these are just that—scary. Yet these are in fact products of common foods, bread, pizza and pasta that many of us crave. But they have also become the culprits of one of the latest afflictions worldwide—gluten intolerance.

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat, barley, rye and a hybrid of rye and wheat (triticale). While for many people these are simple nutrients, for others they can wreak havoc in their lives, compelling the body to attack and destroy itself little by little. Why do these foods matter to you as a skin care professional? Because gluten sensitivity is not only a matter of what people put in their mouths, but also what they put on their skin—it turns out that grains where gluten is found are commonly used for cosmetics, lotions and other beauty products.

### The spread of the gluten ban

More and more people are now finding that they have some sensitivity to gluten and are opting for a gluten-free diet, while others are ridding gluten from their lives completely. That may mean no more salon or spa treatments, especially facials—because the products come so close to the mouth—or purchase of beauty products, unless these are clearly gluten-free.

According to the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness, the main organization that brings attention to the gluten intolerant disease known as celiac disease—gluten causes the immune system to damage the small intestine and prevent proper absorption of essential nutrients—one in 133 Americans suffers from the condition.

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BY KRIS CAMPBELL



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"Conventional medical wisdom is that there is no risk to celiacs unless the patient gets the product in their mouth or an open sore," says Dr. Ron Hoggan, editor of the *Journal of Gluten Sensitivity*. "Yet my daughter tried a cream that contained oats and developed a rash that stayed until she stopped using it."

### On demand gluten-free beauty

While experts are still debating whether gluten can indeed be absorbed through the skin—some argue that gluten molecules are too large—gluten intolerance has been reported to cause rashes, inflammation and blisters on the skin. Yet what truly matters is what the client wants, and if no gluten becomes their new motto, then offering gluten-free treatments on your menu and gluten-free products in your retail area are certainly worth considering.

The face is the area of most concern, since products applied on it can easily come into contact with the mouth; therefore gluten-free facials will be among the treatments more sought after by this new and seemingly increasing segment of the population. Liliana Aranda of FACES Mobile Spa in San Francisco, CA, is gluten sensitive and offers strictly gluten-free facials and treatments. "The positive response was overwhelming," she says. Her treatments focus on soothing inflammation

### Salons and spas that offer gluten-free treatments

**FACES Mobile Spa** in San Francisco, CA  
Gluten-free Sensi-Facial with consultation for those with gluten sensitivity or allergy  
Facial (60 min, \$110; 90 min, \$145)  
Back Facial (60 min, \$125; 90 min, \$165)

**Atmosphere Day Spa** in Baltimore, MD  
Passion Facial Peel to clean, purify and protect (30 min, \$75)

**Kasia Organic Salon** in Minneapolis, MN  
Skin Brightener Mask to treat sensitive skin and rosacea (60 min, \$85)

**Clinical Aesthetician for Hormone & Anti-Aging Center** in Albuquerque, NM  
Gluten-Free Facial to soothe sensitive skin (60 min, \$95)

and bringing moisture. She says that her protocol can be altered to include a firming mask, and that she is working on adding acne and facials to cater to men's specific needs. If gluten-free products are soothing to the skin, they can also be cosmeceutical and help with anti-aging treatments as well.

Skin care assessments are crucial for finding out about allergies in general and sensitivity to gluten and soy—clients with some sort of health issue may react unexpectedly due to diet or medications. This is helpful to determine the right facial and products to address their skin concerns, but it can also give you an idea of how many of your regular guests would benefit and appreciate the addition of treatments that cater to their specific needs.

### Ingredients to watch for

Wheat and oat derivatives are common in skin care retail and professional grades—barley is sometimes used and rye is rarely used. Oats are gluten-free, but can be contaminated with wheat during processing. Lactic acid is an interesting ingredient because most celiac sources list it as gluten-free, yet some forms are wheat derived. A good tip to remember is that just because a product does not list the buzzwords (wheat, barley, rye, etc.), it does not mean the product is gluten-free.

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Some skin care companies now offer gluten-free labels, and verifying those with product manufacturers can be worth your while as well.

## Gluten-free friendly

If gluten can be harmful to some, gluten-free can be beneficial to all, so keep that in mind when marketing your latest gluten-free treatments. Market your new services to local doctors and support groups and watch as your clientele expands. Aranda says that word of mouth has been a strong tool, then adds, "my next step beyond social media is to promote my protocol via doctors and nutritional experts with whom I have connected over the last few months."

As skin care professionals, we wish to rejuvenate and repair the skin of our clients, but we also want to make sure that we "do no harm" in the process. Adding gluten-free treatments to your menu need not be intimidating; you might even already

offer treatments that gluten-free seekers could enjoy without fear. So take the time to check your products and come up with creative names that will let your gluten sensitive clients—and future clients—know that your spa is a safe place for them to get treatments. ■

**Kris Campbell** is CEO and a formulator for *Tecniche*, a skin care line dedicated to sensitive skin. She is a certified oncology esthetician, and works with Morag Currin to address the skin concerns of clients who are undergoing cancer treatments. Campbell trains professionals, writes for trade publications and speaks at industry events about conditions faced by people with health challenged skin.



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