



## Gluten in Skincare: Why It Matters More Than You Think

by Kris Campbell

Clients are starting to ask if there are ingredients like Cyclodextrin, Avena Sativa, Triticum Vulgare Starch in our products. These may sound strange however we are adding more food like ingredients into products these days and for some people, these are scary. Yet these ingredients come from familiar sources: bread, pizza, pasta—the comforting foods many crave every day. Unfortunately, they have also become the unexpected culprits of a growing worldwide issue: gluten intolerance.

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat, barley, rye, and triticale (a hybrid of rye and wheat). For many, these are simple nutrients. But for others, gluten can wreak havoc—compelling the body to attack itself, often starting with the digestive tract and progressing to a wide range of symptoms. Why does this matter in the world of skincare? Because gluten sensitivity isn't just about what people eat—it can also be about what they put on their skin.

The very grains that contain gluten are commonly found in professional skincare products, makeup and even cleaning supplies(home and spa).

### BEYOND DIET: THE SKIN CONNECTION

As skincare professionals, it's important to recognize that gluten sensitivity may extend beyond food and into the realm of topical care. Ingredients derived from wheat, oats, and barley are frequently used in lotions, cosmetics, and professional-grade products. While most experts agree that gluten molecules are too large to penetrate healthy, intact skin, things become more complicated when dealing with broken skin, compromised barriers, or highly sensitive individuals. In such cases, even trace amounts of gluten can lead to irritation, rashes, inflammation, or skin flare-ups. As consumer awareness grows, so does the demand for gluten-free skincare options.

## CHANGING CONSUMER HABITS

Today, more people are discovering gluten sensitivity or choosing gluten-free lifestyles as a personal health choice. This shift is no longer limited to diet—it's impacting salon visits, product choices, and even treatment selection.

Facials, in particular, can raise concern due to their proximity to the mouth and the mucous membranes. According to the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness, approximately 1 in 133 Americans has celiac disease, with many more affected by non-celiac gluten sensitivity. And depending on regional diets, those numbers can be even higher in other parts of the world. As awareness continues to grow, clients are increasingly asking, "Are these products gluten-free?"

## REAL CONCERNS, REAL STORIES

Dr. Ron Hoggan, editor of the Journal of Gluten Sensitivity, offers a compelling real-world example: "My daughter tried a cream that contained oats and developed a rash that stayed until she stopped using it." While oats are technically gluten-free, they are frequently cross-contaminated with wheat during farming and processing. This creates concern even around ingredients that may seem "safe" on the surface. Although the scientific debate continues regarding whether gluten can be absorbed transdermally, one thing is clear: your client's trust and comfort matter most.

## MEETING THE DEMAND: GLUTEN-FREE BEAUTY ON THE RISE

Some estheticians—especially those who are gluten-sensitive themselves—choose to work exclusively with gluten-free lines to avoid accidental exposure. Others add gluten-free treatments based on increasing client requests.

And it's not just about avoiding harm—gluten-free products are often packed with skin benefits. They frequently focus on calming inflammation, soothing reactivity, and supporting compromised or aging skin. That makes them ideal not only for sensitive clients, but for anyone seeking gentle, effective skincare.

## WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN INGREDIENTS

Gluten can appear in skincare under a variety of less-obvious names. Some common ingredients to look out for include:

- Oats (Avena Sativa) – Naturally gluten-free, but often cross-contaminated
- Lactic Acid – Usually gluten-free, but may be wheat-derived in some formulations
- Wheat derivatives – Such as Triticum Vulgare (Latin for wheat), hydrolyzed wheat protein, or wheat germ oil
- Barley extract – Sometimes labeled as Hordeum Vulgare

Just because a product doesn't list "wheat" or "barley" doesn't mean it's gluten-free. When in doubt, contact the manufacturer or look for certified gluten-free labeling.

## CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR ALL CLIENTS

Adding gluten-free treatments to your menu doesn't have to be intimidating—you might already be offering gluten-free services without realizing it. Here's how to move forward with confidence:

- Conduct detailed consultations to uncover allergies, sensitivities, medications, or conditions
- Tailor treatments to meet specific needs
- Label gluten-free services clearly on your menu and marketing materials
- Verify ingredients with manufacturers and create a product list you can confidently recommend
- Reach out to local physicians, nutritionists, or support groups—they're great referral sources

Even a small shift in your approach can have a powerful impact on client safety and loyalty.



## THE BOTTOM LINE

As skincare professionals, our role is to restore, nourish, and protect—and that includes protecting clients from hidden risks. Offering gluten-free options isn't just a trend; it's a reflection of modern wellness, awareness, and inclusive care.

By becoming more ingredient-conscious and proactively creating a safe, accommodating space, you not only avoid harm—you elevate your practice, build deeper trust, and open your doors to a broader, more loyal clientele.



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