



# Body/Beauty Products and Supplements

Updated January 2018

*People living gluten-free must monitor anything that is ingested for gluten. Since gluten taken internally can cause adverse reactions, not only foods but also supplements and oral care products must be evaluated. What about topical products? Does 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-containing products are most likely an allergic reaction and are not related to celiac disease or non-celiac gluten sensitivity.

Wheat and oat-based ingredients are sometimes used as additives in beauty and body products such as body and facial scrubs, shampoos, and cosmetics including 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 in relation to these gluten-related conditions.

Washing hands after using gluten-containing products such as lotions or hair gels can eliminate the possibility of any inadvertent intake due to contact between hands and foods which are handled before consumption.

## Lipstick

While data is limited on gluten content of lipsticks, even those which contain ingredients derived from gluten-containing grains are likely to contain such small amounts of gluten as to be insignificant. Although Vitamin E, sometimes found in lipsticks as well as other cosmetics, may be derived from wheat germ oil, it is gluten-free, having been thoroughly distilled and processed.

## Tips

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

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

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

Various companies offer certified gluten-free cosmetics, for individuals preferring this option. (<http://www.gfco.org/certified-directory/certified-products/>)

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.

## 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.

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 fillers and binders.

Some supplements have been certified gluten-free by GIG's GFCO program. (Find GFCO certified products here: <http://www.gfco.org/certified-directory/certified-products/>) Since supplements are covered by the FDA gluten-free labeling regulation, supplements labeled "gluten-free" should also be safe to consume.

Prescription and over the counter medications are not covered by the FDA gluten-free labeling regulation.

**Note:** If a 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.glutenfreedugs.com](http://www.glutenfreedugs.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.

*This article has been assessed and approved by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.*

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Other helpful information is available at [www.GLUTEN.org](http://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 support group as another resource.

Gluten Intolerance Group (GIG)  
31214 – 124th Ave. S.E.  
Auburn, WA 98092-3667

Phone: 253-833-6655  
Fax: 253-833-6675

[www.GLUTEN.org](http://www.GLUTEN.org)  
[customerservice@GLUTEN.org](mailto:customerservice@GLUTEN.org)

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.