



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELSEY LYON

GLUTEN-FREE BEAUTY

If you don't eat gluten, why would you want to put it on your skin?

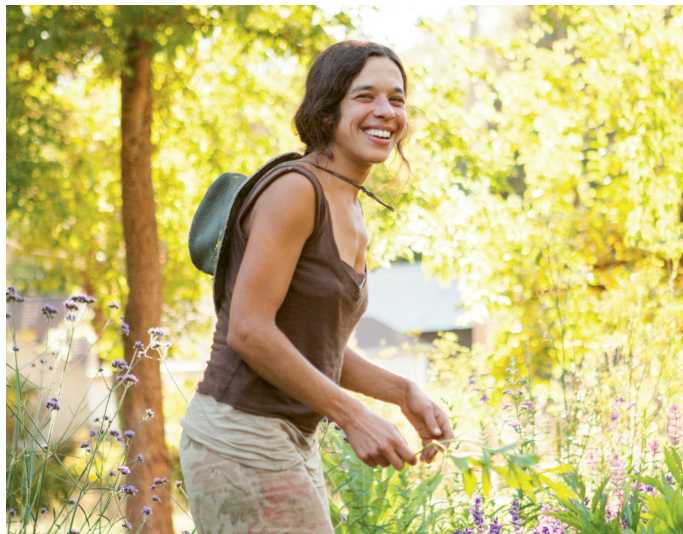
By Feifei Sun

Doctors, health gurus and celebrities alike have, for years, acknowledged the potential positives of a gluten-free diet, even for those who don't suffer a gluten intolerance. Chief among the benefits: weight loss, clearer skin and an overall boosted immune system. It's only fitting, then, that the health trend has migrated to the beauty industry, where cosmetics brands have populated store shelves with gluten-free alternatives to classic staples, like foundation, lipstick and mascara.

But whether these products are essential for

those insensitive to gluten—a protein and starch composite found in grains such as wheat, barley and rye—is a question up for debate. Gluten severely affects an estimated 1 in 133 Americans who suffer from celiac disease, but nearly 20 million more may have some sort of intolerance to it, according to Dr. Alessio Fasano, director of the University of Maryland Center for Celiac Research. Still, only a fraction of that population is affected by topical gluten contact. But if you are in that group, it may be cause for concern.

“Gluten-containing skincare products and →



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cosmetics aren't a problem unless you accidentally swallow them," writes Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist Michael F. Picco on the health organization's website. "For this reason, avoid using such products on your lips or around your mouth. Also, avoid using gluten-containing dental products, such as certain mouthwashes and toothpastes."

Ayo Hart, founder and managing partner of Dolphin Organics, says she's also not convinced that gluten-free beauty is a necessity. "Ideally you're not going to have trouble unless you're ingesting the products," she says. "But I cannot debate the fact that so many of our customers say they have a reaction to beauty products with gluten." To that end, the company recently started offering gluten-free shampoo, conditioner and body wash for children, and is exploring other possibilities for gluten-free goods.

That will come as relief—quite literally—to people like Kristen Campbell, founder of the glutenfreebeauty.com blog. In her mid-20s, Campbell experienced severe breakouts on her face, chest and back, and began an elimination diet to pinpoint the problem: gluten. If avoiding gluten in her food produced such dramatic improvements, why not rid it from her skin routine as well, Campbell thought. "If you think about products like shampoo and conditioner, which are coated onto your hair and drip down your skin, it only makes sense that people are going to be affected by it if they suffer a gluten intolerance," she says.

Gabriel DeSantino, CEO and founder of Gabriel Organics Skincare and Zuzu Luxe Cosmetics, went as far as to have his lines certified gluten-free by a third-party certifier. "Our products have always been gluten

free, and one of the many decisions in certifying our products was to offer our customers with gluten intolerance and allergies 100 percent confidence while using our products," he says. Certification was done by The Gluten Intolerance Group for Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO) program (gfco.org).

For those looking to introduce gluten-free products into their regimen, research is a key first step. Since it is a market still in its infancy stages, Campbell recommends placing more emphasis on user reviews than customers would for more established and well-known brands. Labels—and learning how to read them thoroughly—are also vital. "Avoiding wheat, barley and oats is a great first step, but there are often ingredients, like lactic acid, which can be derived from gluten-containing ingredients, so it's important to know that distinction," Campbell says.

Millet, fermented grain extract, amino peptide complex and triticum vulgare oils and extracts are just some of the ingredients derived from wheat, barley or rye that can cause skin irritations; other ingredients to avoid are a bit easier to spot, including wheatgerm oils and oatmeal. Less obvious are ingredients like barley extract, phytosphingosine extract, fermented grain extract, hydrolyzed wheat starch and protein. And, there are common ingredients, like Vitamin E oils and Vitamin A antioxidants that sometimes contain wheat—those who have a severe intolerance for gluten should call the product manufacturer to check.

As Hart says, "Every company is going to have gone through different standards in manufacturing their products, so it's really important to research each product individually."

SHOP GLUTEN-FREE

Here are just a few examples of brands (and specific products) in the growing ranks of gluten-free beauty.

Gabriel Organics Skincare
gabrielcosmeticsinc.com

Zuzu Luxe Cosmetics
gabrielcosmeticsinc.com

Dr. Scheller Skincare
drschellerusa.com

CV Skinlabs (with the exception of the Body Repair and Calming Moisture, which contain beta-glucan)
cvskinlabs.com

Mineral Fusion
mineralfusion.com

Dolphin Organics (gluten-free shampoo, conditioner and body wash for children) dolphinorganics.com

Afterglow Cosmetics
afterglowcosmetics.com

EO eoproducts.com

Desert Essence (lip tints, toothpaste and more)
desertessence.com