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Against the Grain

Discover how gluten-free treatments and products can help plant the seeds of change for accommodating the increasing number of spa-goers with this sensitivity.

“If someone suffers from an autoimmune disease or gluten sensitivity, it is risky to use products that may aggravate the disease.”

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION for Celiac Awareness, 1 in 133 Americans suffer from celiac disease, a genetic autoimmune disease that can cause inflammation and damage to the lining of the small intestine and interfere with the absorption of nutrients from food, causing fatigue, bloating, and other digestive issues. In addition, 18 million Americans have a non-celiac gluten sensitivity, which is six times the number of Americans who have celiac disease. Symptoms typically appear after ingesting foods containing gluten, which is a protein found in wheat and grains like barley and rye.

According to Kate Solomon, creator of Babo Botanicals, autoimmune diseases, such as celiac disease and gluten sensitivity, are linked to genetics and the environment. “Some environmental

factors may include what children and adults ingest and use on their bodies,” she says. “If someone suffers from an autoimmune disease or gluten sensitivity, it is risky to use products that may aggravate the disease.” If a client with celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity has any skin lesions, for example, a skincare product with gluten can penetrate the skin and be absorbed into the body. As a result, spas and skincare companies are beginning to recognize the need to accommodate this growing group of clients with gluten-free treatments and products.

Losing Wheat

Wheat is a common additive in beauty products, including body and facial scrubs, shampoos,

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and cosmetics such as lipsticks, says Shel Pink, founder of SpaRitual and SlowBeauty.com. It is also commonly used as a hydrating agent and color source in lipsticks. Because skincare products are not supposed to be inhaled or ingested, allergy warnings are not typically visible, which make lipsticks, glosses, and balms particularly dangerous for those with a gluten allergy. "Lip products can easily be ingested due to the proximity of the mouth," says Erin Ferrill, director of east coast sales and education at HydroPeptide. Because of this danger, Pink made sure that all of SpaRitual's lip glosses were gluten-free.

According to Shannon McLinden, founder and president of FarmHouse Fresh, moisturizers are also a big concern for gluten-free buyers, because they stay on the skin for longer periods of time than other products. Therefore, clients and estheticians catering to clients with a sensitivity should be diligent in identifying the ingredients on each product's label to ensure that it is completely free of gluten. In addition to wheat, barley, and rye, it's important to recognize other forms of these ingredients that can be found on labels, including wheatgerm oil, wheat starch, wheat bran, wheat amino acids, and hydrolyzed wheat protein. "We only have a few products that contain barley extract and organic vodka made from American rye, so the vast majority of our line is gluten-free, and it is published on our packaging," says McLinden. Babo Botanicals also highlights that all of its products are free of

gluten, as well as soy, dairy, and high-allergy nut oils like peanut and almond. "We created a hair, skin, and suncare line for any child or adult who has very sensitive skin and who may suffer from allergies," says Solomon.

In addition to being free of gluten ingredients, you should make sure that no part of the product, ingredient, or component has come in contact with gluten in any way to cause cross-contamination. For example, you can make sure the skincare company did not process the gluten-free products on machinery that had previously processed gluten, says Ferrill. Also, there is third-party certification that is available to validate and ensure honest gluten-free claims. According to Tina Zillmann, founder of Advanced Rejuvenating Concepts, spas opting to provide gluten-free services and sell gluten-free retail should perform their due diligence before making these gluten-free claims. "Gluten-free claims are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for foods but not personal care products," says Zillmann. "Before marketing gluten-free in your facility, be sure the services and products fall in line with your company's core values and take measures to educate your customers about gluten in skincare. The practical knowledge you provide can help them span across all personal care products, including shampoos, bodycare, and even laundry detergent. Do more than give them a gluten-free facial. Give them a result, and empower them with wise choices."

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Grains, such as wheat (shown), barley, and rye, are just a few of the ingredients gluten-sensitive clients should avoid.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK





Gluten is often used as a hydrating agent in lip products.

“Offering gluten-free skincare allows your spa to target gluten-sensitive clients...”

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Market Value

Offering gluten-free skincare allows your spa to target gluten-sensitive clients, as well as clients who are not aware of their gluten allergies and those who choose to avoid gluten for lifestyle and other reasons. “I believe all clients can benefit from gluten-free products,” says Solomon. “It’s like food—you can always find a replacement that tastes just as good but is healthier. The same goes with hair- and skincare. Performance is not undermined.”

However, while all clients can benefit from gluten-free skincare, spas should mainly focus their marketing efforts on targeting gluten-sensitive clients who might not be aware that they can enjoy the benefits of spa treatments without the worry of experiencing a reaction. “Don’t tout a gluten-free product to a client who is not concerned with these claims—they just want a product that works and will make their skin look and feel better,” says Zillmann.

Pink recommends making a note on the spa menu if a service is gluten-free. At **The Umstead Spa** at The Umstead Hotel & Spa (Cary, NC), for example, gluten-sensitive guests can book the Organic Facial (\$120, 50 minutes) based on the description found in the menu of services. It explains that the facial uses De La Terre Skincare products that are completely synthetic-free,

gluten-free, vegan, and organic, as well as contain no parabens, petrochemicals, or mineral oils to provide a nurturing and holistic facial experience. Similarly, **The Vanderbilt Spa** at The Vanderbilt Grace (Newport, RI) offers the Gluten-Free Spa Getaway (starting at \$965), a package that includes a two-night stay in a junior suite; a gluten-free cooking class; gluten-free in-room snacks, treats, and beverages; and soothing gluten-free spa treatments. It’s the ultimate vacation package for the gluten-sensitive spa-goer.

To draw the attention of gluten-sensitive clients at the spa, Solomon believes that signage is key, and spas should create a gluten-free designated area. Babo Botanicals offers shelf-talkers that say gluten-free, for example. Clients who express an interest in gluten-free treatments and products prior to booking a service or during the pre-service consultation will appreciate an esthetician’s or therapist’s knowledge about the allergy and willingness to modify a treatment to accommodate them without hesitation. “Simply making customers aware that there is an option for those with specific ingredient concerns is a really good thing,” says McLinden.

Preventative Measures

Gluten-free products are typically sought after by those guests who have an allergy to gluten, but according to Ferrill, it is important to distinguish between an allergic reaction when gluten is ingested as opposed to an allergic reaction when gluten is applied topically to the skin. “While the first priority should always be guest safety, it has been shown that many people with internal gluten allergies generally do not have topical allergies,” she says. Still, because of the risk of an allergic reaction, it is important for spas to arrange for a thorough consultation with clients prior to any skincare treatment and be sure to ask about any allergies. “Service providers should always ask their clients if they have any allergens or sensitivities before treating them,” says Pink. “There are many gluten-free treatments for spas to offer their gluten-sensitive clients. With gluten-free products in-house, the service provider is prepared to customize a treatment and create the best spa experience for them.”—*Nicole Altavilla*

[skin deep]

WHEAT CONTROL

Check out the wide range of benefits available from these gluten-free products.—*Jessica Morrobel*

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1. Advanced Rejuvenating Concepts Triple Action Eye Complex:

Designed to provide moisture and anti-aging support for dull, damaged skin around the eyes, this treatment boosts collagen synthesis and improves radiance, tone, and texture.

www.arcskincare.com

2. Alchimie Forever Kantic+ Intensely Nourishing Cream:

Formulated with antioxidants derived from blueberries and red clover, this vegan cream reduces redness and prevents the formation of free radicals.

www.alchimie-forever.com

3. Amber Products Classic Cleanser:

Featuring white oak bark and yucca extract, this gentle paraben-free foaming cleanser removes makeup and impurities without overdrying the skin.

www.amberproducts.com

4. Dermalogica Skin Smoothing Cream:

Created to balance combination and dry skin, this moisturizer contains aloe gel, arnica, cucumber, and lecithin to restore suppleness and shield skin from environmental aggressors.

www.dermalogica.com

5. Epicuren Daily Antioxidant Moisturizer:

This cream rejuvenates and hydrates the skin while antioxidants improve the skin's radiance.

www.epicuren.com

6. Ilike Organic Skin Care Hyaluronic Time Erase Complex Moisturizer:

Containing corn germ oil, ginkgo, and horsetail, this formula replenishes the skin's moisture barrier while reducing the appearance of fine lines.

www.szepelet.com

7. Norvell Professional Venetian Sunless Mist:

Relying on aloe leaf juice and caffeine, this paraben-free mist promotes a dark, long-lasting tan while repairing dry skin with natural enzymes.

www.norvelltanning.com

8. Osmosis Pür Medical Skincare Deep Clean Detox Cleanser:

Suitable for blemish-prone skin, this gentle cleanser relies on citrus essential oils to remove impurities and excess oil.

www.osmosisskincare.com

9. Phytomer CC Crème Skin Perfecting Cream SPF 20:

Infused with a proprietary natural marine sugar and brown algae, this pore-refining cream stimulates cell turnover for a luminous complexion.

www.phytomerusa.com

10. Skinprint Revive Serum:

This serum helps regulate sebum levels and prevents the formation of blemishes and acne on the surface of the skin.

www.skinprint.com

11. Sothys Paris Energizing Night Cream:

Made with glycolic acid and sophora flower extract, this cream rejuvenates skin overnight while stimulating collagen production.

www.sothys-usa.com

12. SpaRitual Vegan Lip Gloss:

This lip gloss moisturizes and provides protection against free radicals with cocoa seed and shea butters.

www.sparitual.com