

Does It Matter If Your Body Wash Is Gluten-Free?

By *Korin Miller* // May 13, 2016 2:30 Pm



If you want to avoid gluten, there are tons of products out there that cater to you—cookies, crackers, breads, and cereals all come in gluten-free varieties now. But now the gluten-free label is expanding into a growing number of beauty products, specifically body washes, lipsticks, and lotions.

If you have a gluten intolerance or are just trying to avoid gluten, does it *really* make a difference if it shows up in something you don't eat?

Experts say it depends on what kind of products you're using and how allergic to gluten you really are. "Beauty products containing gluten can be ingested and negatively impact those with celiac disease," says David E. Bank, M.D., director of the Center for Dermatology, Cosmetic, and Laser Surgery in Mount Kisco, New York. For people with a serious gluten allergy, using gluten-free lipstick and lip balms (which can easily be ingested) is crucial, he says.

But body wash? Last we checked, people aren't exactly licking it in the shower. Gary Goldenberg, M.D., medical director of the Dermatology Faculty Practice at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, says there's really no reason to go gluten-free for this. "There's no scientific evidence that using gluten-free topical products is beneficial to those that are gluten allergic," he says. "In these individuals, gluten interacts with their gut and causes systemic inflammation. Applying topical products should not interact with their gut at all."

Dr. Goldenberg says there's a "minimal chance" that gluten could be absorbed through your skin via body wash or lotion, seep into your bloodstream, and cause an allergic reaction. However, if you're truly allergic to gluten and feel worse when you use products that contain the ingredient, he says there's no harm in trying gluten-free topical products, just to be safe.

But, if you're just trying to avoid gluten in your diet, Dr. Goldenberg says it's best to just save your money: "There isn't scientific data to support use of these more expensive products."

Dr. Bank agrees. "If you have celiac disease, gluten-free products are definitely worth the money because your body will reject the products otherwise," he says. "If you don't have this sensitivity, there are not any notable benefits."