



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

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Celiac Patients Face Potential Hazard As Information on Cosmetic Ingredients Difficult to Find *Products Used on Lips and Face Can Result in Unexpected Exposure to Gluten*

Washington, DC (October 31, 2011) – The lack of readily available information about cosmetic ingredients may cause patients with celiac disease who use lip, facial or body products to unknowingly expose themselves to gluten—an ingredient they need to avoid, according to the results of a new study unveiled today at the American College of Gastroenterology’s (ACG) 76th Annual Scientific meeting in Washington, DC.

The study, **“Information About Cosmetic Ingredients is Difficult to Obtain: A Potential Hazard for Celiac Patients,”** focused on the top 10 cosmetic companies in the United States in order to evaluate the availability of information about cosmetic ingredients and the accessibility of gluten-free products.

“While information on the ingredients of food products has become increasingly available, recent reports have revealed that the use of some cosmetics, including products used on the lips and face, can result in unexpected exposure to gluten,” said researchers Marie L. Borum, MD, EdD, MPH and Pia Prakash, MD, of George Washington University.

Dr. Borum said this study was prompted in part by one of her patient cases, **“Body Lotion Causing A Celiac Exacerbation and Dermatitis Herpetiformis: Natural is Not Always Healthy,”** where a 28-year old woman experienced exacerbation of her celiac symptoms, including gastrointestinal complications and a recurring skin rash after using a body lotion advertised as “natural.”

“It was difficult to determine whether gluten was contained in the product she was using,” said Dr. Prakash. “But once she stopped using the body lotion her symptoms resolved.

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This case highlights the fact that celiac patients face a huge challenge in trying to determine whether cosmetic products contain gluten—and a risk of unknowingly exposing themselves to gluten.”

The lack of readily available information about cosmetic ingredients that Dr. Borum experienced first-hand with her patient led researchers to identify the top cosmetic companies in the United States and subsequently visit the official website for each company and search for “gluten” and “gluten free” to determine products specifically manufactured without gluten. Additionally, the ingredients for each cosmetic were also researched using an independent website.

Only two of the top ten cosmetic companies in the United States offered detailed ingredient information, however no gluten sources were identified, according to the study. The independent websites offered ingredients from five companies—but no gluten sources were identified. Ingredient information was unavailable for four companies and none of the cosmetic companies specifically offered gluten-free cosmetic options, according to the study findings.

“The findings are alarming because gluten-containing cosmetics can be inadvertently obtained by the consumer and use of these products can result in an exacerbation of celiac disease,” said Dr. Prakash. “This study revealed that information about the ingredients, including the potential gluten content, in cosmetics is not readily available.”

Dr. Prakash added that while smaller companies may specifically advertise gluten-free alternatives, “top-selling manufacturers should indicate whether their products can be safely be used by individuals with gluten sensitivity.”

About Celiac Disease

Affecting as many as 2-3 million people in the United States and 20 million worldwide, celiac disease is an autoimmune digestive disease that damages the villi of the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. Approximately 1 out of every 100 people may have celiac disease, though only 1 out of 10 people with celiac disease may be actually diagnosed and are aware that they have this disease. Women are diagnosed with celiac disease two to three times more often than men and current research indicates that 60 percent to 70 percent of those diagnosed with celiac disease are women, according to the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness.

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The only treatment option for those with celiac disease is gluten avoidance. Patients who do not adhere to the gluten-free diet usually continue to suffer from symptoms such as abdominal pain, bloating, gas and diarrhea. In addition, these patients are at higher risk for developing complications of celiac disease such as cancer of the small bowel and esophagus, and narrowing in the bowel due to inflammation.

About the American College of Gastroenterology

Founded in 1932, the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) is an organization with an international membership of more than 12,000 individuals from 80 countries. The College is committed to serving the clinically oriented digestive disease specialist through its emphasis on scholarly practice, teaching and research. The mission of the College is to serve the evolving needs of physicians in the delivery of high quality, scientifically sound, humanistic, ethical, and cost-effective health care to gastroenterology patients. www.acg.gi.org View releases on other research breaking at the ACG meeting at www.acg.gi.org/media/press.asp [Follow ACG on Twitter](#)

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