

THE CHILD HEALTH CONNECTION, INC.

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THE DILEMMA OF HIDDEN NUT OILS IN CONSUMER PRODUCTS

In addition to consumable goods, the potential for some form of nut being included in other products is concerning to individuals with severe nut allergies. Sunscreens, cosmetics, and other skin care products, are among those that may include some form of nut oil. Many manufacturers will not “guarantee” that no nut oils are included in their products even when that inclusion is not intended. This is primarily because the same equipment is often used to produce varied products and even with thorough cleaning it cannot be guaranteed that there is not some nut residue that may be transferred to a supposed nut-free product. That being said, it has been concluded that *generally* the risk is extremely small for an anaphylactic reaction to these products, given the refined nature and miniscule content of the allergen.

UNDERSTANDING THE INGREDIENTS LISTS

It goes without saying that reading product labels, and having a clear understanding of what it is you are reading, is important for those individuals with allergies! Often products are listed in the ingredients list by their Latin name and may be overlooked when you are looking for specific nut listings. For instance “arachis oil” is actually peanut oil, (any form of the word arachis should be suspect if peanuts and their byproducts are being avoided), Prunus dulcis is almond oil, etc. Be aware of this and when in doubt either research the product or avoid it altogether.

One ingredient that has been a contentious issue for sometime is coconut oil. Is it a nut or a fruit? The answer to that would depend on which resource you seek out. According to the FDA it is a “nut,” however, the duty of the FDA is labeling, and they are not experts in allergens. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) state that coconut is “not a botanical nut.” Most botanists consider coconut a fruit and not a nut. It has been noted that very few people who are allergic to tree nuts exhibit an allergic reaction to coconuts and VERY few people are allergic to coconuts themselves. However, this is an issue to check out with your physician if you have concerns regarding the potential risk of anything containing coconut/coconut oil.

CROSS CONTAMINATION

Be aware of the potential for cross contamination when applying sunscreens or other skin lotions to a child. In the child care setting, application of such products should include only those that parents have preapproved and/or provided. Note: When the application of a lotion containing nuts/nut oil is applied to a non-allergic child, hands should be thoroughly washed with soap and water before applying a “nut free” lotion to a child with allergies.

IN SUMMARY

It is important to note that little is known about the allergic risk from food ingredients that are present in cosmetics, toiletries and skin care products. That risk may be small or nonexistent because the ingredients used may have been highly refined, (the allergy-causing protein removed from the oil) posing little threat of anaphylaxis, but you may wish to play safe and avoid such products. The key message is: *always read the label!*

RESOURCES

www.nutmums.com. “Should nut allergic people avoid toiletries and cosmetics containing nuts or nut oils?” April, 2014

www.aaaai.org. “Risk of Anaphylaxis to Topical Almond Oil.” August, 2014

<https://wholenewmom.com>. “Are Coconuts Nuts? The Facts.” Updated May 22, 2018

<https://www.laurenkossack.com> “Hidden Allergens in Your Sunscreen.” April, 2016.