

Criteria for allergy-friendly cosmetics

Background

Cosmetics can, in rare cases, provoke allergic reactions due to the ingredients they contain, such as preservatives or fragrances. ECARF certified cosmetics have demonstrated in scientific tests that they do not to cause side effects and there is no expected risk that a new allergy will develop through their use. However, despite meticulous product formulation and testing, allergic reactions cannot be completely ruled out in individual cases. The manufacturers of allergy-friendly cosmetics must meet the following criteria for their product(s):

1. Criteria 1.1 Ingredients

Allergy-friendly cosmetic products may not contain irritating ingredients in amounts that exceed their respective threshold values. This property must be confirmed through the tests indicated below. As a rule, cosmetic products of all categories may only contain ingredients that have no allergic potential in the concentrations used.

Furthermore, they must comply with additional standards, depending on the product category:

- **Fragrances:** In 1999, the SCCNFP (Scientific Committee on Cosmetics and Non Food Products) identified a set of 26 fragrances with a higher potential to cause allergies in comparison to other fragrances. ECARF-certified products may not contain any of these 26 fragrances, or may only contain them in trace amounts below the allergenic threshold. Since fragrances can also improve product quality, there is no objection to the use of non-allergenic fragrances or fragrances below the allergenic threshold.
- **Preservatives:** The use of preservatives may be unavoidable for certain products due to the risk of harmful contamination that may occur in their absence. Preservatives should be used only at the lowest possible effective concentrations or not at all. Methylisothiazolinone and certain derivatives, Kathon CG (MCI/MI) and/or iodopropynyl butylcarbamate cannot be used in any formulations.
- An exception is made for benzyl alcohol, which acts as both a fragrance and a preservative. Since the allergenic potential of benzyl alcohol is considered very low, this ingredient may be used at a concentration of less than 1 %.

Banned ingredients:

- Fragrances subject to individual labelling
- **Type I allergens:** Allergy-friendly cosmetics may not contain food allergens (such as wheat protein, walnut protein, peanut protein, almond protein, macadamia nut protein). Specifically, if a product contains ingredients such as walnut oil, evidence must be provided that the substance does not contain any protein, since the protein is a type I allergy trigger.
- **Hydrolysed proteins:** The degree of hydrolysis may vary; as such the product may only contain partially hydrolysed protein. Proof of the degree of hydrolysis must be provided.

The concentrations of the following categories of substances are the deciding factor. This is individually evaluated by dermatologists:

- UV filter: physical or chemical
- Dyes
- Particles for peeling
- Activated carbon
- Beeswax: For pharmaceutical grade purified wax, proof that it is not contaminated with pollen or propolis is required

ECARF dermatologists and allergologists evaluate the formula and ingredients of each product for quality and safety based on the above criteria and international standards.

1.2 Subject Testing

The product's tolerability in persons with sensitive, eczema-prone skin must be proven in clinical tests involving human subjects. Tolerability is demonstrated in a usage test corresponding to the product application. 20 subjects of the designated user group with sensitive skin and medically diagnosed atopic dermatitis are included in the test, during which the cosmetic product is used. The application period may vary depending on the product type. Allergy friendliness will be considered clinically proven if none of the subjects experience significant worsening of their condition within this period, apart from typical variations in skin condition due to atopic dermatitis.

2. Quality Control and Complaint Management

The manufacturer has established a functional system of quality control that responds effectively to consumer complaints. The system ensures the following:

- The manufacturer's contact details, such as the address, telephone number and/or email address, are clearly visible on the product packaging;
- Consumer complaints are handled and followed up in an appropriate manner by qualified and experienced personnel of the manufacturer;
- The assessment of consumer complaints and, if applicable, any inferred areas of improvement are reapplied to product quality and safety. The manufacturer agrees to make this data available to ECARF on an ongoing basis.