TEETH WEEK | JUNE 28 019

What Are the Best Natural Toothpastes?

By Karen Iorio Adelson

We're taking a deep dive into everything you need to take better care of your teeth (and gums and tongue), from toothpicks to tongue scrapers. Welcome to Teeth Week at the Strategist.

Photo: Courtesy Hello

The word "natural" gets bandied around a lot these days, and can have different definitions depending on whom you ask. In terms of toothpaste, Lara Kaiser, of the natural-beauty mecca Shen, says natural varieties are generally formulated without foaming agents like diethanolamine or sodium lauryl sulfate, or artificial colors and sweeteners. Along with ethical and sustainable concerns, there can be some medical reasons to avoid these ingredients. Dr. Sonya Krasilnikov of Dental House says SLS "was shown to cause gingival irritation and increased occurrence of aphthous ulcers [or canker sores] in those patients who are prone to them."

Some natural toothpastes are fluoride-free, though, which most dentists don't recommend. Krasilnikov says fluoride, a mineral that occurs naturally in water and soil, is "the only ingredient to date that had been proven to strengthen enamel and significantly decrease cavity risk." Dr. Inna Chern says no natural toothpaste will earn the American Dental Association's (ADA) seal of acceptance unless it contains "the minimum amount of fluoride necessary to prevent cavities." And while fluoride is toxic in large quantities, cosmetic dentist Dr. Lana Rozenberg says "it all depends on how much you ingest. Theoretically, you're not sitting there eating your toothpaste, so you get very little." If you want to avoid unnecessary additives and stick with naturally sourced ingredients, the toothpastes recommended below are solid alternatives.

Best overall natural toothpaste

Hello Naturally Whitening Fluoride Toothpaste

~~$20~~ **now 20% off**

$16 for 4

Chern and Krasilnikov both like this natural toothpaste from Hello that's SLS-free, cruelty-free, and is made with mint grown in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. It also includes fluoride, which means it's a natural toothpaste with ADA approval. Dentist Dr. Jonathan B. Levine says fluoride is important for kids because it "gets into the tooth, hardens it, and makes it impervious to decay," and for adults, for whom it "works topically on the tooth [and] helps prevent plaque and bacteria from sticking on the tooth."

Best SLS-free (non-ADA-approved) natural toothpaste

Jason Powersmile Anti-Cavity & Whitening Gel

$9

Chern also recommends Jason toothpaste to her patients looking for a natural kind. Even though it isn't ADA-approved, it has fluoride, but does not contain SLS, gluten, parabens, or artificial sweeteners. It also features additional natural ingredients that can contribute to mouth health, like bamboo powder for whitening, and coenzyme Q10, an antioxidant. Levine says antioxidants and vitamins in toothpaste can be "very good for soft tissue health."

Best artificial-sweetener-free natural toothpastes

Tom's of Maine Enamel Strength Natural Toothpaste

~~$14~~ now 64% off

$5

If you're not sensitive to SLS, Tom's makes ADA-approved, natural toothpaste that's free of artificial dyes and sweeteners. Rozenberg immediately mentioned Tom's when asked about natural toothpaste. "It's the original and it works," she says. "It works very well, [and it's] very mild and not abrasive."

A VERY GOOD DEAL!

Tom's of Maine Natural Toothpaste with Baking Soda and Fluoride

~~$12~~ now 25% off

$9

It's also possible to get some whitening effects from a natural toothpaste. While Rozenberg says you'll need stronger ingredients like peroxide to remove deep, intrinsic stains on teeth, the baking soda in this toothpaste will work surface-level stains by removing plaque and tartar.

Best fluoride-free natural toothpaste

Auromere Ayurvedic Herbal Toothpaste

$12 for 2

A small minority of dentists, like Dr. Gerry Curatola of Rejuvenation Dentistry, do approve of non-fluoride toothpastes. Curatola says that, despite the introduction of fluoride into toothpaste and our water supply, there's still "an epidemic amount of dental caries [or cavities]." He believes these can instead be prevented by maintaining a "healthy, balanced oral microbiome," and he likes that this toothpaste from Auromere "does not disturb the microbiome that much." There has been one study showing that non-fluoride ingredients can be used as an additional method to fight cavities but not as a substitution, so it's best to check with your dentist first before going off fluoride.

Davids Peppermint Natural Toothpaste

~~$12~~ **now 17% off**

$10

If you're really committed to going fluoride-free, Kaiser likes Davids toothpaste. "It tastes amazing, gets really foamy and leaves your mouth feeling clean and fresh," she says. "It comes with a little key so you can squeeze the tube down and get every last glob." Of course, it's also vegan, free of SLS and sulfates, sustainable, and ethically made.

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