

# Benefits Spotlight

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## A closer look at natural toothpaste

If you're considering swapping out mainstream products for more natural ones, it can be difficult to know where to start. Just about everything has an "all-natural," "non-toxic," "clean" or "organic" version nowadays, so it's best to start small – as small as a tube of toothpaste.

Here are the highlights of natural toothpaste you need to know before making the switch.

### What's the difference between traditional and natural toothpaste?

The term "natural" on a product label isn't regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or any other governing body, so manufacturers don't have strict requirements to meet to feature that label. However, natural implies that the product is made without any synthetic (also known as artificial, man-made or laboratory formed) ingredients. Instead, the ingredients are found in nature. This is why many natural toothpastes highlight ingredients that are from the earth, such as charcoal, coconut oil, salt and natural sweeteners (like peppermint essential oil).

An important thing to remember when switching to a natural toothpaste is that fluoride is a naturally occurring ingredient. Some natural toothpaste brands boast that they don't contain fluoride, but fluoride is proven to prevent cavities and is an ingredient found in nature so you shouldn't feel the need to avoid it. You can still use a fluoride toothpaste while maintaining a commitment to naturally-derived products.

### Is natural toothpaste safe and effective?

Purchasing a natural toothpaste may feel like a healthier option compared with the mainstream toothpaste brands on the market, but that's not necessarily the case. Natural products aren't clinically better than traditional toothpaste at preventing cavities and gum disease, or whitening teeth. However, some natural brand toothpastes perform better than others.

A clear way to identify a quality toothpaste – natural or otherwise – is if the American Dental Association (ADA) seal is on the package. This shows that the product has been evaluated by an independent body of experts and found to be safe and effective.

Several natural toothpaste brands have earned the ADA's seal, and you can search for a specific brand [here](#) to see if your toothpaste is on the list.

If you're interested in a product that doesn't show the ADA seal, that doesn't mean it's not safe or effective. A good next step is to give your dentist a call so they can weigh in with their opinion.

### **Your dentist can help clear product confusion**

Natural products have exploded virtually everywhere, including the at-home dental health market. If you're interested in a product but aren't sure whether it's safe or effective, ask your dentist. If it's not a good choice, your dentist can recommend another natural product that supports both your lifestyle and oral health.

### **SOURCES:**

[Michigan State University](#)

[The University of Texas at Austin](#)

[Allure](#)

## **The problem with vaping after dental surgery**

When you're undergoing surgery, there's only so much you can do to ensure its success: The skill of the surgeon plays the biggest role during a procedure. But after – during the all-important recovery period – you have a lot more control.

It's important your dental surgeon understands your lifestyle habits, as they can get in the way of your healthy recovery. Vaping (or e-cigarette use) is an example of a lifestyle habit that your surgeon needs to know about – and here's why.

### **Is vaping really any different than cigarette smoking?**

Vaping is often viewed as a healthier alternative to smoking, but one of the dangers of vaping and e-cigarettes is that we still don't know much about the long-term effects.

One thing experts do understand is both cigarettes and e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which wears down tissue in your mouth. When it comes to surgery recovery, this is important, as nicotine works against your body's natural ability to repair itself because it reduces the oxygen that tissues need to heal. During recovery, this lack of oxygen can also lead to infection, which can derail a healthy dental surgery recovery.

Nicotine has also been found to interfere with anesthesia, and the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists stated that neither smoking nor vaping is safe for patients undergoing surgery.<sup>1</sup>

### **Don't be afraid to tell your dental surgeon about your vaping habit**

Before surgery, your dental surgeon will ask about your smoking status. This is the opportunity to share about your vaping habits. This information is extremely important to your dental surgeon. The more your surgeon understands about your lifestyle habits, the better your surgery and long-term outcomes will be. Knowing the full picture will allow your surgeon to make specific recommendations for you that will promote a smooth and successful recovery.

**Other tips for dental surgery recovery success**

- *Don't be afraid to ask questions:* If something doesn't make perfect sense when you're receiving your recovery instructions, ask for clarification.
- *Get everything in writing:* It can be overwhelming to take in all the steps you need to keep track of for a successful recovery. Your dental surgery team will likely give you a hard copy of instructions, so keep this handy and refer back to it to ensure you are clear on your recovery expectations.
- *Set reminders:* Keeping track of medication doses, gauze changes and other recovery items can be a lot to manage inside your head. A helpful way to keep your recovery smooth sailing is to set reminders on your phone or device.
- *Ask for help:* Managing your dental surgery recovery alone can be challenging. If you have a loved one nearby who can check on you and assist, reach out to them before your surgery and ask if they're willing to help. If you don't have anyone nearby to help, talk to your surgery team about options you can explore to get assistance during your recovery period.
- *Get any follow-up appointments booked prior to surgery:* Getting your follow-up appointments on your calendar before your surgery is just one less item you need to take care of after.
- *If something seems off, call your surgeon:* The dental surgery recovery period may have times of pain or discomfort, but if your pain is too much, call your surgeon. Also, ask your surgeon about any other symptoms that warrant a call to the office (such as fever or other signs of infection).

Nicotine is a primary cause for concern if you're undergoing dental surgery. Even if you vape products that claim to contain no nicotine, nicotine may still be included in the substance. The best course is to avoid the products entirely. It will not only support your successful dental surgery recovery but also give you the clearest path forward to overall good health.<sup>2</sup>

**REFERENCES:**

- [1. Science Daily](#)
- [2. The Journal of the American Dental Association](#)