



Factsheet on Microplastics - NATRUE position

No product carrying the NATRUE seal will contain microplastics (microbeads) because they are prohibited by NATRUE criteria¹.

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What are microplastics?

Microplastics (microbeads) are small particles (0.1 - 5000 µm in size) made from synthetic plastic polymers, like polyethylene (PE), which may be found in finished cosmetic and personal care products. Microplastics are intentionally added for a number of cosmetic functions including exfoliation in skin care or tooth polishing in oral care products.

What is the problem with microbeads?

Due to their presence in 'rinse off' products, like shower gels, face peelings or toothpastes, microplastics can directly enter water waste. While the majority of particles are filtered out, a small amount can, due to their size, pass unfiltered through water treatment plants and finally end up in the oceans²⁻⁷. Once released to the environment they may persist as they are non-biodegradable. The result is an accumulation of such marine pollutants in the oceanic environment.

Are there replacements/alternatives to microplastic use?

Microbead use in cosmetics is avoidable and there are alternatives.

Specifically, for natural cosmetics there are alternatives with exfoliating properties available. For example: inorganic minerals (such as those found in quartz sand); abrasives and exfoliants isolated from plants (such as sucrose from sugar cane or finely milled fruit seeds or shells e.g. from apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*), olive (*Olea Europaea*), walnut (*Juglans regia*), etc.); beads made of cellulose; plant waxes, like beeswax (*Cera Alba*) and carnauba wax (*Copernicia Cerifera* (Carnauba) Wax) or hydrogenated castor oil.

What does the NATRUE criteria allow/prohibit?

All microplastics are prohibited as they are usually synthetic plastic polymers manufactured from mineral oil.

Only cosmetic ingredients that meet the requirements of one of the three permitted classifications (as natural, nature-identical or derived natural substances⁸) may be used in certified finished products that carry the NATRUE seal.

References

¹ [NATRUE criteria](#)

² [Presence of microplastics and nanoplastics in food, with particular focus on seafood. EFSA Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain](#)

³ [GESAMP Reports and Studies No. 90: Sources, fate and effects of microplastics in the marine environment.](#)

⁴ [Microplastics - occurrence, effects and sources of releases to the environment in Denmark. Environmental project No. 1793. Copenhagen: Environment Protection Agency, Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark.](#)

⁵ [Swedish sources and pathways for microplastics to the marine environment.](#)

⁶ [Elimination of micro-plastics in products - an urgent need.](#)

⁷ [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\) Report on: Plastics in Cosmetics](#)

⁸ <http://www.natrue.org/information-for/consumers/what-makes-the-natrue-label-special/>