



C O R N U C O P I A
I N S T I T U T E

TOOTHPASTE SCORECARD CRITERIA

The toothpaste scorecard rates brands as a whole, not individual products. Brand scores are based on information from ingredient labels. The majority of toothpastes rated fall in the “natural” category. We have only included a few mass-market toothpastes, like Colgate, as a comparison to the natural alternatives.

This practical guide was created to help you decipher toothpaste ingredient labels, which are often intelligible only to cosmetics chemists. Manufacturers and marketers should be held accountable for making toothpaste—an oral hygiene product—into a potentially toxic mixture of synthetic and petroleum-derived compounds such as artificial sweeteners, preservatives, detergents, and artificial flavors and colors.

We encourage consumers to seek out USDA certified organic products. Organic ingredients reduce exposure to toxic agrichemicals. Organic ingredients are always non-GMO. For further discussion, please see our toothpaste report, [Behind the Dazzling Smile](#).

RATING EXPLANATIONS

Fluoride – Brands that do not use fluoride in any of their products receive 100 points. Brands that use fluoride in some, but not all, of their products receive 50 points, and brands that use fluoride in all of their products receive 0 points.

Carrageenan – Brands that don’t use carrageenan receive 100 points. Research funded by the National Institutes of Health indicates that carrageenan can act as a potent intestinal inflammatory agent causing a myriad of negative health outcomes, including potential cancer. Brands that use carrageenan receive 0 points.

Artificial surfactants/detergents/foaming agents – Brands that don’t use synthetic surfactants/detergents/foaming agents except those approved by the [NSF/ANSI 305 Standard](#) receive 100 points. Brands that use these products receive 0 points.

Artificial colors – Brands that don’t use artificial colors receive 100 points. But be aware that “natural” colors may be derived from conventionally grown fruits or vegetables, which may contain pesticide residues. Whenever possible opt for colors derived from organic vegetables or fruits. A close scrutiny of the ingredient label is consistently necessary. Brands that use artificial colors receive 0 points.

Artificial sweetener(s) – Brands that don't use aspartame, sucralose, saccharin, or other artificial sweeteners receive 100 points. Brands that use artificial sweeteners receive 0 points.

Artificial flavors – Brands that don't use artificial flavors receive 100 points. But read the label and opt for organic flavors when possible, as even "natural" flavors are commonly derived from industrial food processes typically using synthetic chemicals in their production. Brands that use artificial flavors receive 0 points.

Artificial preservatives – Brands that don't use artificial preservatives receive 100 points. Brands that use artificial preservatives receive 0 points.

PEGs and Polypropylene glycol – Brands that don't use these compounds receive 100 points. Brands that use these compounds receive 0 points.

Triclosan – Brands that don't use triclosan receive 100 points. Brands that use triclosan receive 0 points.

May contain toxic contaminants – Brands that don't use ingredients that may contain or release toxic contaminants (see [report](#) for additional details) receive 100 points. Brands that use these ingredients receive 0 points.

Possible GMO ingredients – Brands that do not use ingredients possibly derived from GMO crops receive 100 points. Brands that use ingredients that are likely derived from GMO crops (such as conventional soy and corn) receive 0 points.

Organic Status:

- **Percent organic** – Brands that contain 30% or more organic ingredients receive 50 points, those with less than 30% organic ingredients receive 10 points, and those without any organic ingredients receive 0 points.
- **Organic certification** – Brands that have an organic certification (from the USDA in the U.S. or from other countries), or specific "certified natural" certifications, receive 50 points. Brands without any such certifications receive 0 points.

A brand that contains 30% or more organic ingredients and has an approved organic or natural certification will score 100 points. A brand that has less than 30% organic ingredients and no approved organic or natural certification (such as Jason or Tom's of Maine) will score 10 points.