

## How to make microbead alternatives at home

*Whip up scrubs with natural exfoliants, like poppy seeds and sugar.*

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Salt is a natural exfoliator for your skin. Other ingredients include sugar, fine coffee grounds and even grits. (Photo: MosayMay/Shutterstock)  
**Still using skin products with microbeads? Stop.** Many exfoliants and various cosmetics use microbeads to achieve a desired abrasive effect.

However, the plastic waste caused by microbeads can't be filtered out during sewage treatment and is damaging to marine ecosystems because the beads flow directly into rivers, lakes and oceans. A [report from the Federation of American Scientists](#) examines the path of microplastic debris and the consequences of not phasing them out.

"The super tiny pieces of plastic end up in the water supply, only to be swallowed by underwater creatures, which could eventually reach our plates," says Luciana Hipolito, a

bridal makeup artist at BlushingBridesBoston.com, a boutique service that travels to brides on their wedding day.

Illinois has banned the sale of products with microbeads and other states are in various stages of passing legislation prohibiting them. To determine which of your daily products contain microbeads, check the ingredients list on the packaging. Keep an eye out for ingredients like polyethylene, polypropylene, terephthalate polyethylene, polymethyl methacrylate and nylon. "If you find words like these, you might be using plastics to clean your body or face," says Hipolito.

Fortunately, it's easy to make alternatives. Here are some ideas to replace microbead products with more sustainable ingredients.

### **Seeds, nuts and shells**



Grab a reusable spice shaker and fill it with poppy seeds (or walnut shells or cranberry seeds) for a quick exfoliant addition to your soap. (Photo: Africa Studio/Shutterstock)

Rachel Potucek, founder of People's Soap Co. in Santa Ana, California, says poppy seeds' smooth surface and small round shape make them an excellent alternative to microbeads. Not a fan of poppy seeds? No worries. Lots of other natural substances can be substituted for them. Fill a clean, reusable spice shaker with your choice of ground oats, poppy seeds, sugar, cranberry seeds, fine ground coffee grounds, walnut

shells or apricot shells. Store the spice jar in your bathroom. Shake a small amount into your regular soap lather, and scrub gently when you need to exfoliate. The spice jar keeps your scrub clean and dry.

"I'd recommend using a very small amount of scrub, and do not press hard into the skin to avoid irritation. Go easy on your skin and try spot tests until you know what works best for you," says Potucek. Some people with sensitive skin may find nut shells are too harsh.

### **Grits aren't just for breakfast**

"When I was a child, my mother would exfoliate her skin with cornmeal. I'm so grateful for this lesson, as it later became the inspiration for my organic grits and honey scrub and its use of cornmeal as the exfoliator instead of harmful microbeads," says HollyBeth Anderson, founder and formulator of Atlanta-based USDA certified organic skincare brand, HollyBeth Organics.

### **Baking soda and sugar**



Sugar can be a little harsh on your face, but the rest of your body can handle its exfoliating properties. (Photo: Aleksandra Kovac/Shutterstock)

If you need a quality exfoliant to maintain a healthy complexion, Hipolito offers these homemade recipes:

## **For the face**

- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon coconut oil

Mix well and apply to face, gently rubbing. Rinse immediately. The baking soda has excellent exfoliation properties but can cause drying if left on your skin too long. The coconut oil serves as a counter-balance to moisturize your skin.

## **For the body**

- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons sugar

Mix well and apply to body, gently scrubbing. "Sugar is likely too harsh of an exfoliant for your face, so I only recommend this recipe for your body."

## **Salt**

Nora Schaper, co-founder of Bodylish, a natural body care company that gives a portion of its annual profits to environmental nonprofit groups, is a fan of salt and other natural exfoliators. "In our products, we use natural ingredients as exfoliators as opposed to microbeads. We use ingredients such as sea salt, pink Himalayan salt, organic brown sugar, sugar, rosehip seed powder, ground almond meal, even gluten-free oats."

Here's a salt recipe from Amrita Aromatherapy, an aromatherapy company offering high-quality, organic essential oil aromatherapy products.

## **Good Morning Shower Salt Scrub**

- 2 drops lemon essential oil
- 3 drops rosemary essential oil
- 4 drops peppermint essential oil
- 1/4 cup sea salt
- 1/4 cup cornmeal
- 1/3 cup olive oil

## **Dairy**

Try washing with either yogurt or sour cream or adding one of your favorite exfoliants like poppy seeds, sugar or salt for extra oomph.

"Natural alternatives which work chemically rather than physically include yogurt and sour cream, due to their glycolic, lactic and malic acid content, although these are relatively mild, and their smoothing effect will not last longer than 1-2 days," says Dr.

Diane De Fiori, dermatologist at Melbourne Dermatology Rosacea Treatment Clinic in Melbourne, Australia.

No matter which natural face or body scrub you choose, you'll not only help the waterways stay clean, but soften and shed skin just as effectively.