

What Are the Health Benefits of Coconut Oil?

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It seems that coconut oil has been getting a lot of press lately and for many different reasons. It has a number of surprising uses, as a food, certainly, but for many other health-related benefits. Some of them are quite surprising.

That's why coconut oil seems to have moved from "What is it?" to "It's a superfood!" as people all over the world take stock of what it can do for them.

The Overall Health Benefits of Consuming Coconut Oil

Nutritionally speaking, the fatty acids in coconut oil lend can have significant effects on your wellbeing. Just take a look at some of the body-wide benefits you can reap just by adding this oil to your diet:

- Supports proper thyroid function** – Unlike soy oil and other vegetable oils, coconut oil does not interfere with thyroid function. It has anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce inflammation that may lead to hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism.¹

- Promotes heart health** – Animal and human studies found that heart disease risk factors such as total, LDL and HDL cholesterol levels were greatly improved by taking coconut oil.

In particular, coconut oil's saturated fats may actually increase "good" HDL cholesterol, while also helping convert "bad" LDL cholesterol into a less harmful form.² (More on this later)

- Promotes healthy brain function** - Researchers found that ketones may work as an alternative energy source for malfunctioning brain cells, which has been found to reduce symptoms in Alzheimer's disease patients.³

- Gives your immune system a boost** – The lauric acid, antimicrobial lipids, capric acid, and caprylic acid that coconut oil contains are known for their antifungal, antibacterial and antiviral properties.⁴

Regularly using it may help prevent colds/flu, and alleviate illnesses like hepatitis C, herpes and the Epstein-barr virus.⁵

- Helps promote weight loss** – Coconut oil provides an excellent "fuel" for your body and stimulating your metabolism to help you shed excess body fat.

- Aids in digestion** – This oil is easy on your digestive system, and will not produce an insulin spike in your bloodstream. The medium-chain fatty acids can also be absorbed easily in your digestive tract, compared to longer chain fatty acids found in polyunsaturated vegetable oils.

•**Maintains healthy and youthful looking skin** – Applying coconut oil topically benefits your skin as it helps reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines. This is because the oil keeps your connective tissues strong and supple.

It can also exfoliate dead skin cells, giving your skin a smoother and healthier appearance.

•**Keeps candida yeast from wreaking havoc on your body** – A study published in mSphere found that mice that were given coconut oil had a 10-fold drop in the colonization of *Candida albicans* yeast in their gut, compared to mice that were given soybean oil or beef tallow.⁶

•**Promotes good oral health** – One study found that massaging coconut oil on your gums for 10 minutes a day, for at least three weeks, has a significant effect on reducing plaque and decay-causing *Streptococcus mutans*.⁷

But aside from its internal health benefits, coconut oil has countless other uses. You can rely on it for topical beauty applications or a first-aid treatment. It can even play a role on your household cleaning and sanitizing (more about this later)!

Coconut Oil Has Fatty Acids That Are Good for You

You may have heard that while saturated fat was once thought to be a leading cause of heart disease, it's now known to be not just beneficial but crucial for good health. The good news: coconut oil is one of the best sources of saturated fat on the planet. In fact, about 90 percent of the fat content in coconut oil is saturated fat.

Rather than clogging your arteries, damaging your coronary system and putting you on the fast track to a stroke, new information has emerged in a significant meta-analysis,⁸ which showed no significant evidence that saturated fat causes any of the above, but is in fact very good for you.

Coconut oil contains medium-chain triglycerides that can have therapeutic benefits for people with certain brain disorders, epilepsy, and may even help prevent Alzheimer's disease.⁹

Where Coconut Oil Has Been Used, People Thrive

As you look at the civilizations around the world that have consumed coconut oil for decades and even centuries, it's clear there's a difference, medically speaking, between those individuals and those of the so-called "enlightened" first-world countries.

They seem to be healthier! As an example, individuals in Polynesian populations such as those in Tokelau and Pukapuka, where people tend to eat a lot of coconut, were examined in light of their high saturated fat intake and low cholesterol and sucrose levels.

Researchers found that "vascular disease is uncommon in both populations and there is no evidence of the high saturated fat intake having a harmful effect."¹⁰

Another case in point is the Kitevan people in New Guinea, whose collective diet is untarnished by the food habits of the Western world. Besides eating a lot of tubers, fruit and fish, the people also consume coconut as a prominent staple.

None of the people involved in the study¹¹ reported stroke, sudden death, weakness, brain diseases, or chest pain related to heavy lifting. Coronary artery disease was nowhere to be found. The only inference that can be made is that, rather than being sick, weak and diseased, many populations around the world have managed much better than more "progressive" parts of the world on their traditional diets with the plentiful addition of coconut oil.

Triglycerides, Fat and Where It's At

No matter where you travel, practically every place has been influenced by the Western diet, and not in a good way.

Where there's obesity in large amounts of the population, there's a very good chance you'll find misguided and destructive eating habits such as low-fat diets along with too much processed, CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation) meat and not enough vegetables and healthy sources of fat.

Some believe it's all about calorie intake; however, people who have been paying attention to which foods are actually healthy and which are not understand this isn't really the case. It's about the substance behind the calories.

Medium-chain fatty acids or triglycerides (MCTs) in coconut oil amount to about two-thirds its total fatty acids. In explanation:¹²

"Dietary fats are molecules composed of individual carbon atoms linked into chains ranging from two to 22 carbon atoms in length. Long-chain fatty acids (LCTs) ranging from 12 to 18 carbons long are the predominant form of fat in the American diet. MCTs, by contrast, are composed of only six to 10 carbon links. Because of their shorter chain length, MCTs have a number of unique properties which give them advantages over the more common LCTs."

The bottom line is, when you eat foods high in medium-chain triglycerides, your body benefits.

Case in point: when seven healthy men were tested for metabolic function in relation to triglycerides, scientists determined that long-term substitution of medium-chain foods for long-chain "would produce weight loss if energy intake remained constant."¹³ The potential benefit is significant weight loss.

Microorganisms Are Destroyed by Coconut Oil

Lauric acid in coconut oil makes up about half of the fatty acids. In the digestion process, coconut oil morphs into a monoglyceride called monolaurin. Both substances can exterminate harmful pathogens such as fungi, bacteria and viruses.

Staphylococcus aureus and a common cause of yeast infection, Candida albicans, were two of the most notorious pathogens these coconut oil compounds were able to eradicate in one study¹⁴ and candida in another.¹⁵

Coconut oil also works on fungal infections such as athlete's foot and ringworm. The European Journal of Pediatrics even reported research showing that blending coconut oil and anise was almost twice as effective as the commonly prescribed (and toxic) permethrin lotion for treating head lice. According to the review:¹⁶

"The spray was significantly more successful (41/50, 82.0 percent) cures compared with permethrin (21/50, 42.0 percent ...). Per-protocol success was 83.3 percent and 44.7 percent, respectively."

Want to Lose Weight? Coconut Oil Reduces Your Appetite

Many people pay good money in search of a substance that would truly curb their appetite so they would eat less and lose weight. How serendipitous that coconut oil can actually do that for you! The actual process has to do with how the fatty acids you consume are metabolized.

Ketone bodies, created when your body breaks down fat for energy, are an alternative fuel for your brain. They're produced as you digest coconut oil.

Studies on men consuming the most MCTs at breakfast found they ate less overall at lunchtime.¹⁷ Those eating the most MCTs consumed an average of 256 fewer calories on a daily basis.¹⁸

The ketogenic diet, featuring low carb and high fat intake, has applications in relation to treating a number of other health problems. Significantly, it's been shown to reduce epileptic seizures in drug-resistant children¹⁹ as well as other individuals with epilepsy. At the New York Obesity Research Center at Columbia University, researchers reported:²⁰

"Consumption of medium-chain triglyceride oil as part of a weight loss plan improves weight loss compared with olive oil and can thus be successfully included in a weight loss diet. Small changes in the quality of fat intake can therefore be useful to enhance weight loss."

Coconut Oil Can Upgrade Your Blood Cholesterol Levels

As previously discussed, coconut is loaded with healthy saturated fat, but it does nothing to diminish the health of your blood lipid profile as the food and medical industries has for decades tried to tell you. In fact, saturated fats raise your HDL (good) cholesterol while transforming your LDL. According to the data:²¹

"A high saturated fat intake ... is associated with increased concentrations of larger, cholesterol-enriched LDL and this occurs in association with decreased HL [hepatic lipase] activity."

Consuming coconut oil helps you to maintain optimal cholesterol levels. One study involving 40 women showed that when put up against soybean oil consumption, coconut oil increased HDL and lowered LDL to HDL ratio while decreasing waist circumference. On the other hand, soybean oil led to decreases in beneficial HDL.²²

Coconut Oil as a Toiletry, a Cleaner — Even an Insect Repellent

If you haven't had a chance to explore all the extraordinary uses for coconut oil, you may be in for a pleasant surprise. Besides its ability to promote heart health and squelch the risk of stroke, it's been shown to strengthen your immune system even as you attain soft, supple skin.

Coconut oil works well as a facial cleanser and makes a great shaving lotion. Slathering it on dry, lifeless hair for 15 minutes helps restore lost moisture and shine.

While it doesn't impart the minty aftertaste that most toothpastes pride themselves on, using it before bed helps not only freshen your breath, but kills bacteria that cause plaque and other problems, without the fluoride (and if you miss the minty taste, just add a drop of peppermint essential oil). If you're looking for a natural deodorant that will last and won't pose potential health risks from added aluminum, thoroughly mix:

- 3 Tbsp. organic coconut oil
- 3 Tbsp. non-GMO cornstarch or arrowroot powder
- 3 Tbsp. baking soda
- 2 drops of essential oil of your choice, or a pinch of clove powder

As for the insect repellent, a good recipe combines coconut oil with a high-quality essential oil such as peppermint, lemon balm, rosemary, tea tree or vanilla, which may help keep insects from biting, as opposed to applying toxic sprays like DEET.

What You Don't Know CAN Harm You

In spite of all the clinical verification to the contrary, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)²³ still maintains there's "no good evidence" that coconut oil performs any

of the above functions. CSPI even contradicts recommendations that people switch from vegetable oils, including canola oil, to coconut oil for better health. In another decidedly ignorant move, CSPI fell in lock-step with the biotech industry for profit with the announcement that "fear" of GMOs is "irrational" and that GMO foods are "safe to eat."

At the same time, a statement signed by 300 scientists, researchers, physicians, and scholars was published contending that claims of GMO safety have been "falsely perpetuated." Clearly, somebody is not telling the truth or has not done their due diligence to figure it out.

That's not the only discrepancy in the world of pseudo science that purports to be in the interest of human health. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) came forward with a declaration that, as of 2018, partially hydrogenated oils (aka trans fat) would no longer be allowed in food unless authorized by the agency because of potential health risks. Yet the FDA was in the forefront of getting trans fats into the marketplace in the 1980s.

In the 1980s, CSPI actually spearheaded a highly successful campaign *against* the use of healthy saturated fats, touting trans fats as a healthier alternative, so take their official stance against coconut oil with a (big) grain of salt. In spite of the naysayers, the real science speaks. Coconut oil has undergone the trials that prove its benefits are, indeed, undeniable.

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