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eFlash



## Coconut Oil

Proponents of coconut oil point to Weston Price's observations of the health and longevity of tropical populations that for centuries have regularly consumed large quantities of coconut and its oil. It is becoming more accepted that coconut oil has been unfairly caught up in the fat-fearing food fads of the past few years. Coconut oil comes under fire because its main component is saturated fat.



Coconut oil is challenged on two fronts. First is the erroneous belief that all dietary fat becomes body fat. Second is the erroneous belief that it is the same saturated fat like the fat in beef, cheese, eggs and butter. Saturated fatty acids from these sources tend to raise levels of LDL cholesterol (the 'bad' cholesterol) in the blood.

Studies increasingly indicate that a heart-healthy diet does not exclude saturated fat. Rather, that a correct balance of saturated, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats is best. Only a mixed-fat diet promotes a healthful ratio of LDL to HDL (the 'good' cholesterol) and lowers the risk of heart disease.

One thing both sides agree on is that when coconut oil is hydrogenated it becomes a trans fat, and trans fats are bad. Trans fats have been closely associated with heart disease because they not only increase LDL cholesterol but they impede the body's ability to utilize HDL. The coconut oil in packaged and snack foods and nondairy creamers is hydrogenated.

Coconut oil is a medium chain fatty acid (MCFA), whereas other saturated fats such as butter and lard are long chain fatty acids (LCFA).

Approximately 50 percent of the fatty acids in coconut fat are lauric acid. Lauric acid is a medium chain fatty acid (MCFA), which has the additional beneficial function of being formed into monolaurin in the human or animal body. Monolaurin is the antiviral, antibacterial, and antiprotozoal monoglyceride used by the human or animal to destroy lipid coated viruses, various pathogenic bacteria, and protozoa.

MCFAs are metabolized differently. MCFAs are carried by the portal vein to the liver where they are rapidly oxidized to energy. Conversely LCFAs are carried in the lymph and eventually reach the liver where they undergo further oxidation that repackages them as cholesterol and triglycerides. In addition, research confirms that LCFAs cause people to gain weight; they are stored in adipose fat tissue.

Popular television personality and cardiologist Mehmet Oz, MD, says that "coconut oil has gotten a bad rap." On his show entitled "Coconut Oil Super Powers," he explained that, in addition to weight loss, coconut oil could help heal skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and topical fungal infections. It can also help heal ulcers. According to Oz, who is also Vice Chair of the Department of Surgery at Columbia University, it's not just the MCFAs that provide benefit, the high lauric acid content of coconut oil has antimicrobial properties which may help explain why it benefits the stomach lining and the skin (when used topically).

Coconut oil improves digestion and absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, minerals (especially calcium and magnesium), and amino acids. It improves the way the body uses blood glucose and improves insulin secretion and absorption. The risk of diabetes decreases with regular use of coconuts and coconut oil. Coconut oil helps the body heal and repair faster. It aids and supports immune function, protecting from a variety of cancers.

Coconut oil is good for the heart. It keeps blood platelets from sticking together reducing the risk of clots. The routine use of coconut oil lowers the risk of atherosclerosis (clogging of the arteries), arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), and strokes. Coconut oil can help lower blood pressure. It is a natural antioxidant and helps to protect the body from free radical damage, prevents premature aging, and helps guard against degenerative diseases.

Daily consumption of coconut or coconut oil builds up the supply of the nurturing fatty acids contained. By cooking or heating, almost all oils start to turn the oil into partially hydrogenated oil. Coconut oil is one of the most stable oils; it does not become rancid easily.

Virgin coconut oil is safe to cook with at medium or high heat. Some experts speculate that the health benefits from coconut oil come when it is used in place of unhealthy oils such as butter, margarine, and lard. While olive oil is "healthy" oil, it should not be used to cook at medium or high heat. It is best used after cooking to flavor foods and as a dietary nutrient.

The Coconut Research Center is a not-for-profit organization operated by an all volunteer staff under the direction of Bruce Fife, N.D. Dr. Fife is the author of 18 books including The Coconut Oil Miracle (formerly titled The Healing Miracles of Coconut Oil), Coconut Lover's Cookbook, and Eat Fat, Look Thin.

According to Dr. Fife, the list of benefits attributed to the use of unrefined coconut oil is as follows:

#### INTERNAL USE

- Kills viruses that cause influenza, herpes, measles, hepatitis C, SARS, AIDS, and other illnesses.
- Kills bacteria that cause ulcers, throat infections, urinary tract infections, gum disease and cavities, pneumonia, and gonorrhoea, and other diseases.
- Kills fungi and yeasts that cause candidiasis, ringworm, athlete's foot, thrush, diaper rash, and other infections.
- Expels or kills tapeworms, lice, giardia, and other parasites.
- Helps prevent periodontal disease and tooth decay.
- Provides a nutritional source of quick energy.
- Boosts energy and endurance, enhancing physical and athletic performance.
- Improves digestion and absorption of other nutrients including vitamins, minerals, and amino acids.
- Improves insulin secretion and utilization of blood glucose.
- Relieves stress on pancreas and enzyme systems of the body.
- Reduces symptoms associated with pancreatitis.
- Helps relieve symptoms and reduce health risks associated with diabetes.
- Reduces problems associated with malabsorption syndrome and cystic fibrosis.

- Improves calcium and magnesium absorption and supports the development of strong bones and teeth.
- Helps protect against osteoporosis.
- Helps relieve symptoms associated with gallbladder disease.
- Relieves symptoms associated with Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and stomach ulcers.
- Improves digestion and bowel function.
- Relieves pain and irritation caused by hemorrhoids.
- Supports and aids immune system function.
- Reduces inflammation.
- Supports tissue healing and repair.
- Helps protect the body from breast, colon, and other cancers.
- Functions as a protective antioxidant.
- Does not form harmful by-products when heated to normal cooking temperature like other vegetable oils do.
- Helps to protect the body from harmful free radicals that promote premature aging and degenerative disease.
- Does not deplete the body's antioxidant reserves like other oils do.
- Improves utilization of essential fatty acids and protects them from oxidation.
- Helps relieve symptoms associated with chronic fatigue syndrome.
- Relieves symptoms associated with benign prostatic hyperplasia (prostate enlargement).
- Heart healthy; improves cholesterol ratio reducing risk of heart disease.
- Protects arteries from injury that causes atherosclerosis and thus protects against heart disease.
- Helps protect against kidney disease and bladder infections.
- Dissolves kidney stones.
- Helps prevent liver disease.
- Supports thyroid function.
- Reduces epileptic seizures.
- Increases metabolic rate promoting loss of excess weight.
- Not stored in the body like other fats, instead it is utilized to produce energy.
- Helps prevent obesity and overweight problems.
- Lower in calories than all other fats.

#### TOPICALLY:

- Helps to form a chemical barrier on the skin to ward off infection.
- Reduces symptoms associated with psoriasis, eczema, and dermatitis.
- Supports the natural chemical balance of the skin.
- Softens skin and helps relieve dryness and flaking.
- Prevents wrinkles, sagging skin, and age spots.
- Promotes healthy looking hair and complexion.
- Provides protection from damaging effects of ultraviolet radiation from the sun.
- Helps control dandruff.

Some of the nutritional and therapeutic benefits of coconut oil come from the saturated fats in the oil, such as its resistance to oxidation, its long shelf life, and its superior cooking properties. Some benefits come from the medium chain triglycerides such as the antimicrobial effects, and some from the unique mode of digestion and nutrient delivery. However, most of the medicinal benefits undoubtedly come from the ketones produced from the medium chain triglycerides (MCTs): the protective effects on the heart, brain, kidneys, colon, pancreas, and other organs; the metabolic boosting and energizing effects; and the anti-cancer, anti-diabetes, and anti-Alzheimer's effects come principally from ketones.

## References:

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**Yours in Good Health!**

Sincerely,

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The Back to Herbs Team

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