

The Amazing Benefits of Coconut Oil

You may often find coconut oil in your everyday life. Your cooking oil, homemade soap, essential oil, and even your body lotion is made of coconut oil. Coconut oil is an edible oil which is extracted from the meat or kernel of mature coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*).

Coconut oil production makes up around 2.5% of vegetable oil production in the world.

Coconut oil contains a high saturated fat content, which is two times higher than palm oil. Due to its high saturated fatty acid content, coconut oil is slow to oxidize and makes it resistant to rancidification (a process which causes a substance to have an unpleasant smell or taste) which lasts up to six months without spoiling when kept at 24 °C (75 °F). Coconut oil is the most nutritious part of the coconut. Like butter, coconut oil is solid at room temperature and doesn't break down due to heat or light.

Coconut oil comes from copra, a dried coconut flesh, which will be refined after becoming a crude coconut oil, will be bleached and deodorized to make it fits for human consumption. Coconut oil which is made of copra is different with virgin or extra virgin coconut oil that you may know in the market. Coconut oil derived from oil extraction and refining process of crude coconut oil can be less nutritious.

Here is some explanation about different types of oils as coconut oil derivatives.

1. Unrefined **organic coconut oils**

Unrefined **organic coconut oil** is said to be the gold standard. This type of oil is made of fresh coconut oil which undergoes a wet-milled fermentation process that can protect the beneficial properties of the coconut and makes it has the highest antioxidant levels. The making process does not reduce unrefined **organic coconut oil** nutrition because it doesn't go through a heating process.

2. Refined coconut oils

Although refined coconut oil comes from coconut, it doesn't have coconut smell and is often tasteless. The coconut must be heated, bleached, and then deodorized to

make refined coconut oil. Refined coconut oils might be healthy, but many of it does not have the same benefits as in unrefined one.

3. Extra virgin oil

Extra virgin is produced by both cold-pressing and hot-pressing the oil. Based on a study conducted in India in 2013 (published in the journal of Food Science and Biotechnology), "hot extracted virgin coconut oil" (HEVCO) produced the highest amounts of antioxidants compared to **virgin coconut oil cold press** (CEVCO). It is concluded that heat is necessary to produce a good number of antioxidants in virgin coconut oil. The study also showed that that virgin coconut oil raises the "good" HDL cholesterol and lower LDL cholesterol.

4. Fractionated oil or MCT oil

Fractionated oil or MCT oil will not experience solidification below 76 degrees as many other unrefined oils do. The oil does not contain many benefits of unrefined coconut oil but has a higher brain-boosting fat.

For internal uses, it is best to consume unrefined organic oil, while for external uses, expeller pressed coconut oil. Also, other types of refined or fractionated coconut oil will work.

Coconut oil contains pretty high saturated fat content such as lauric acid, a saturated fat that can increase the amount of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, thus raises total blood cholesterol levels. It is not recommended for consumption by certain people, such as people who have cardiovascular disease.

Many health organizations, including the United States Food and Drug Administration, World Health Organization, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, International College of Nutrition, and much more, advise people not to consume coconut oil due to its high levels of saturated fat.

However, recent research showed that this stigma was unwarranted. In fact, there are many **coconut oil benefits** you can get when you consume coconut oil. So, to answer the

question whether it **is coconut oil good for you**, let us find out more about its amazing benefits.

Coconut Oil Benefits for Health and Coconut Oil Uses

1. There are many pieces of evidence showing that diet has a great impact on oral health, especially whether enough minerals are present in the diet. Fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) must also be enough in the diet. It is also determined by whether these nutrients are bio-available and how well the body is absorbing them. For example, the phytic acid—which is found in grains, seeds, nuts, and legumes and a smaller amount of it in vegetables and fruits—that we consume will be converted into phytates naturally by the body, which is un-absorbable and can take calcium from the body.

High-level phytate causes the metabolism to go down, and the body will suffer from lack of phosphorus and calcium with poor bone growth (which usually happens in growing children). They will suffer tooth decay, mineral deficiencies, and even osteoporosis.

Coconut oil can be one of the solutions as it can increase the absorption of magnesium and calcium, and in the end, help remineralizes teeth internally, reduce plaque induced gingivitis and plaque formation. You can add a couple of tablespoons of organic, virgin, and unrefined coconut oil to a cup of tea or smoothie, and drink it daily.

2. If it consumes daily, the **benefits of coconut oil** also include an ability to improve insulin levels, boost hormone production, improve sleep and speed up weight loss as coconut oil is used as an immediate source of energy and won't be stored as fat in the body.
3. It may help to support healthy thyroid function and endocrine system.
4. Some studies also prove that coconut oil beneficial fats can help with anxiety and depression.
5. Coconut oil can boost circulation. Thus, it very much helps people who often feel cold.

6. When taken with fermented cod liver oil, coconut oil can help to provide necessary fats for the development of the baby during pregnancy.
7. **Coconut oil uses**—like many other potential saturated fats—include avoiding Alzheimer disease, although there is not enough experimental evidence to prove the claims. Neurons (nerve cells) in the brain of people who have Alzheimer disease are starving because they are incapable of producing energy properly. And coconut oil may act as an alternative energy source to feed the brain cells.
8. Compared to other edible oils, coconut oil is easy to digest. By removing stress on the pancreas, it may increase the body's metabolic rate and burn more energy in the body. It will help the body to lose weight and reduce abdominal obesity in women.
9. Coconut oil is good to improve immunity due to its antimicrobial, antibacterial, and antiviral properties, such as lauric acid, antimicrobial lipids, caprylic acid, and capric acid. The lauric acid will be converted into monolaurin which has proven to be effective against bacteria and viruses that cause diseases like influenza, cytomegalovirus, herpes, and even HIV. Coconut oil can fight harmful protozoa such as *Giardia lamblia* and harmful bacteria such as *Helicobacter pylori* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.
10. Coconut oil can also help to improve the digestive system. It can prevent various stomach and digestion-related problems such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Also, **coconut oil nutrition** makes the body able to absorb other nutrients like vitamins, amino acids, and minerals.
11. Another **coconut oil benefit** is helping to fight against candidiasis, a disease caused by the uncontrolled and excessive growth of yeast which is called *Candida albicans* in the stomach. It can reduce the effect of inflammation caused by candida, both internally and externally. But the effect of using coconut oil is gradual and not sudden or drastic. It may help the patient to adapt to the withdrawal symptoms or Herxheimer reactions. The symptoms occur due to body's rejection of toxins during the elimination of the fungi.
12. Coconut oil helps to prevent liver diseases, keeping pancreas healthy, preventing kidney and gall bladder diseases, and can help to dissolve kidney stones.

13. Topically, its beneficial fats may help to heal skin faster after infection or injury, to get rid of cellulite, and relieve the pain of haemorrhoids. Coconut oil has a high moisture retaining capacity that can keep the skin from peeling off or cracking.
14. Coconut oil can also protect an infected skin. It will form a chemical layer that will protect the skin from external dust, air, bacteria, fungi, and viruses. It can also speed up healing process on damaged tissues, thus is very effective to heal bruises.

Coconut Oil versus Other Vegetable Oils

There are many vegetable oils available worldwide. However, only a few of them that make up a significant fraction of edible oil in the world which is also used as fuel oils. They are coconut oil, rapeseed or canola oil, olive oil, corn oil, palm oil, cottonseed oil, peanut oil, safflower oil, sesame oil, soybean oil, and sunflower oil. Let's discuss the first five to answer the question **is coconut oil good for you** compared to other oils.

- Coconut oil vs. canola oil

Coconut oil and canola oil might be similar, as they are both derived from plants and contain a similar number of calories per serving. Coconut oil has 117 calories and 13.6 grams of fat while canola oil has 120 calories and 14 grams of fat, per tablespoon serving.

However, the type of fats the two oils differ greatly. Canola oil contains 61% monounsaturated fat, 32% polyunsaturated fat (combined with omega-6 and omega-3) and 7% saturated fat. Conversely, coconut oil has 90% saturated fat which is 11.8 grams of saturated fat per tablespoon.

The monounsaturated fats canola oil contains can reduce levels of total and low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol, and improve insulin sensitivity. Also, one tablespoon of canola oil provides around 12% of the recommended intake of vitamin K and around 15% of your recommended intake of vitamin E.

However, both oils are important if you are trying to lose weight or keep healthy. Coconut oil might provide slightly different benefits than canola oil; you still need to

keep your saturated fat intake under control. It is best to consume a mix of both oils within the calorie boundaries of your diet.

- Coconut oil vs. olive oil

Some studies proved that olive oil has greater healthy heart properties than coconut oil. Olive oil has more monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which is considered as "good fats," than virgin coconut oil. For each tablespoon of olive oil, there are 11 grams monounsaturated fat and 1 grams polyunsaturated fat, while coconut oil contains 0.1 grams monounsaturated fat and 0.25 grams polyunsaturated fat.

Olive oil also contains less saturated fat than coconut oil. Coconut oil has ten times potential saturated fat compared to olive oil, although saturated fats—which are plant-derived—are not as bad as fats from animal-based products.

When it comes to calories, both coconut oil and olive oil are similar. One tablespoon of coconut oil contains 130 calories while olive oil contains 120 calories.

- Coconut oil vs. corn oil

Corn oil contains 12.7% monounsaturated, 58.7% polyunsaturated, and 24.2% saturated fats. When comparing coconut oil and corn oil, both have a similar number of calories and total fats. Coconut oil has 117 calories and 13.6 grams of fat while corn oil has 120 calories and 14 grams of fat. Corn oil contains much less saturated fat which is 2 grams per amount of serving. Corn also contains lutein and flavonoids, which together can help maintain healthy skin, mucous membranes, and vision. More than that, corn has a good amount of vitamin A, thiamine, and vitamin B6.

However, corn oil is rich in polyunsaturated which generate very high levels of aldehydes. Aldehydes are said to increase the risk of heart disease and cancer. Corn oil is best to be served raw without heating such as frying or cooking.

- Coconut oil vs. palm oil

Both coconut and palm oil are both tropical oils, and they have a very different nutritional profile from other vegetable oils. Tropical oils have a distinct characteristic, which is semi-solid at room temperature. This feature makes these oils as a replacement for margarine, butter, and shortening.

Both oils have a similar number of calories and fat content. One tablespoon of coconut oil has 117 calories while palm oil has 120 calories. Both coconut oil and palm oil also have a high amount of saturated fat. However, palm oil has a roughly one-to-one ratio of unsaturated and saturated fats. It is also a good source of vitamin E. Vitamin E is an antioxidant which is fat-soluble that can protect other vitamins, as well as red blood cells and adipose tissue from damage. In one tablespoon of palm oil, there are 2.17 milligrams vitamin E in the form of alpha-tocopherol, while coconut oil has only 0.01 milligrams of vitamin E per tablespoon. Neither oil contains sodium and both oils only contain trace amounts of other micronutrients. Tropical oils may be okay for occasional use. However, it is better to use healthier oils (which have less saturated fats) for cooking and baking such as soybean, corn, sunflower, safflower and cottonseed oils, and monounsaturated fats, such as canola, olive, or sesame oil.

The Nutritional Profile of Coconut Oil

There is a reason to why coconut oil is considered as a powerhouse superfood, which is having a unique nutritional profile. Many people think that 92% saturated fat it contains becomes a reason to why people must avoid it because they think it will cause a risk of cardiovascular disease.

In 100-gram coconut oil, it contains 86.5 g saturated fat, 5.8 g monounsaturated fat, and 1.8 g polyunsaturated fat, 0.09 mg vitamin E, 0.5 µg vitamin K, and 0.04 mg iron. Coconut oil contains the following fatty acid: 48% lauric acid, 16% myristic acid, 9.5% palmitic acid, 8% decanoic acid, 7% caprylic acid, 6.5% oleic acid, and much more. Those fats are mostly saturated fats.

It is true that most of the fats coconut oil contains are saturated, but they are mostly in the form of medium chain triglycerides (MCTs or also called MCFAs). MCTs have a different effect on the body compared to short and long chain fats. The MCTs are composed of the following substances.

- Lauric acid

In the human body, lauric acid is abundant in human breast milk. This fat makes up 40% of the total fat composition of coconut oil. It makes coconut oil as one of the highest natural sources of lauric acid which is available naturally. Your body will convert lauric acid to monolaurin which is useful to increase immunity and to fight viruses and disease. There was a study which stated that a combination of lauric acid-rich coconut oil with oregano oil is effective to fight the staph bacteria than antibiotics and can be a preventive against some cancers.

- Caprylic acid

Caprylic acid is a type of healthy fat which has antimicrobial and antibacterial properties.

- Capric acid

This fat will be converted into monocaprin in the body. Monocaprin has antimicrobial and immune boosting properties.

Just like many other substances that we consume, the fats that are being metabolized by the body will be broken down before they can be absorbed. Coconut oil is rich in short and medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs), and the body will easily digest those substances and sent to the liver for energy production.

Because the fats are directly sent to the liver, bile or pancreatic enzymes are not needed for digestion. It might be the reason coconut oil is considered as a healthy food and safe even for people with gallbladder problems or those who have diabetes. The body is also able to get an instant source of energy, and a quick source of brain fuel as MCFAs are sent right to the liver, and this process may help increase metabolism.

MCFAs are hard to find in nature and naturally free of cholesterol. These **coconut oil nutrition** properties make them able to help your body losing weight. It is because MCFAs

aren't digested or stored in the same way as another kind of fats and are more quickly available for use. Coconut oil also contains a decent number of healthy polyphenols and several fats soluble vitamins (mainly A and K).

Apart from the above benefits, **what is coconut oil good for?** Some studies found that coconut oil is linked to the following health benefits.

- A high content of lauric acid can lower blood pressure and cholesterol. Lauric acid can help to keep arteries flexible and prevent atherosclerosis because it doesn't increase LDL. Atherosclerosis happens when plaque builds up inside arteries (blood vessels that have the task of bringing oxygen-rich blood to the heart and other parts of the body). The plaque might be made of cholesterol, fat, calcium, and other substances that can be found in the blood. Atherosclerosis can lead to heart attack, stroke, and even death.
- Due to its unique combination of nutritious properties, coconut oil is shown to help increase thyroid health and endocrine system.
- The fact that it doesn't need enzymes or hormones for digestion and travels directly to the liver makes coconut oil be able to boost metabolism. As coconut oil is not stored as fat, it may help a feeling of satiety and might also help to assist weight loss.
- Coconut oil allows better absorption of vitamin D, calcium, and other minerals. Thus, it can increase bone strength.
- Coconut oil has antifungal and antibacterial properties. MCFAs it contains such as lauric acid, and capric acid can disrupt fungal, bacterial, and viral cell membranes, which leads to cell death. These antifungal properties were shown to help reduce yeast and candida in the body and fight the infections of yeast. These antibacterial, antimicrobial, and antiviral properties are also able to help fight infection and flu.

We have found that there are abundance **benefits of coconut oil**. However, you have to note one thing that applies to any other substance you consume, anything that is excessive is always not good.