20 Coconut Oil Benefits & Side Effects

To date, there are over **1,500 studies** proving **coconut oil** to be one of the healthiest foods on the planet. Coconut oil benefits and uses go beyond what most people realize.

Research has finally uncovered the secrets to this amazing fruit; namely healthy fats called medium-chain fatty acids (**MCFAs**), these unique fats include:

- **Caprylic acid**   **Lauric acid**   **Capric acid**

And around 62% of the oils in coconut are made up of these 3 healthy fatty acids and 91% of the fat in coconut oil is healthy saturated fat.

Most of the fats that we consume take longer to digest, but MCFAs found in coconut oil provide the perfect source of energy because they only have to go through a **3 step process** to be turned into fuel vs. other fats go through a **26 step process!** Unlike long-chain fatty acids (LCFAs) found in plant based oils, MCFAs are:

Easier to digest, not readily stored as fat, anti-microbial and anti-fungal, Smaller in size, allowing easier cell permeability for immediate energy, Processed by the liver, which means that they are immediately converted to energy instead of being stored as fat.

According to medical research, coconut oil benefits the body in the following ways:

1. Proven Alzheimer's Disease Natural Treatment

The digestion of MCFA's by the liver creates ketones which are a readily accessible energy by the brain. Ketones supply energy to the brain without the need of insulin to process glucose into energy.

Recent research has shown that the brain actually creates its own insulin to process glucose and power brain cells. As the brain of an Alzheimer's patient has lost the ability to create its own insulin, the ketones from coconut oil could create an alternate source of energy to help repair brain function.

2. Prevents Heart Disease and High Blood Pressure

Coconut oil is high in natural saturated fats. Saturated fats not only increase the healthy cholesterol (known as HDL) in your body, but also help to convert the LDL "bad" cholesterol into good cholesterols.

By Increasing the HDL's in the body, it helps promote heart health, and lower the risk of heart disease.

3. Cures UTI and Kidney Infection & Protects the Liver

Coconut oil has been known to clear up and heal urinary (UTI) and kidney infections. The MCFA's in the oil work as a natural antibiotic by disrupting the lipid coating on bacteria and killing them. There is a study showing that coconut oil directly protected the liver from damage. Coconut water also helps hydrate and support the healing process. Doctors have even injected the coconut water to clear up kidney stones. Coconut is a super powerful food!

4. Reduces Inflammation and Arthritis

In a study in India, the high levels of antioxidants present in virgin coconut oil reduced inflammation and healing arthritis more effectively than leading medications. In another recent study, coconut oil that was harvested with only medium heat was found to suppress inflammatory cells. It worked as both an analgesic and anti-inflammatory.

5. Cancer Prevention and Treatment

Coconut oil has two qualities that help it fight cancer. One, because of the ketones produced in its digestion. Tumor cells are not able to access the energy in ketones and are glucose dependent. It is believed that a ketogenic diet could be a possible component of helping cancer patients recover.

Two, as the MCFA's digest the lipid walls of bacteria, they also can kill the helicobacter pylori bacteria that has been known as increasing the risk of stomach cancer. Even in studies where cancer is chemically induced, the introduction of coconut oil prevents cancer from developing!

6. Immune System Boost (antibacterial, anti-fungal, and anti-viral)
Coconut oil contains lauric acid, which is known to reduce candida, fight bacteria, and create a hostile environment for viruses. Many diseases today are causes by the overgrowth of bad bacteria, funguses, viruses and parasites in the body. You can replace grains and sugar in your diet with coconut oil as your natural fuel source when you're sick. Sugar feeds the growth of bad bacteria. Instead take 1 TBSP of coconut oil 3x daily when sick and consume plenty of vegetables and bone broth as well.

7. Improves Memory and Brain Function
In a 2004 study published in the **journal of Neurobiology of Aging**, they found that the MCFA's found in coconut oil improved the memory problems in their older subjects.
Across all the patients there was a marked improvement in their recall ability after taking this fatty acid. As the MCFA's are absorbed easily in the body and can be accessed in the brain without the use of insulin, they are able to fuel brain cells more efficiently.

8. Improves Energy and Endurance
Coconut oil is easy to digest, but also produces a longer sustained energy and increases your metabolism. When taking a quality non-processed coconut oil, you can get the most benefit as it's MCFA's are sent directly to the liver to be converted into energy! Today, many triathletes will use coconut oil as their source of fuels during training and races for long distance events. You can make a homemade energy fuel by mixing coconut oil, raw honey and chia seeds together. Simply put together 1 TBSP of each and consume 30 minutes prior to exercise.

9. Improves Digestion, Reduces Stomach Ulcers & Ulcerative Colitis
Coconut also improves digestion as it helps the body to absorb fat-soluble vitamins, calcium, and magnesium.
If coconut oil is taken at the same time as **omega-3 fatty acids**, it can make them **twice as effective**, as they are readily available to be digested and used by the body. Coconut oil can help improve bacteria and gut health by destroying bad bacteria and candida. Candida imbalance especially can decrease stomach acid which causes inflammation and poor digestion.

10. Reduces Symptoms of Gallbladder Disease & Pancreatitis
The MCFA's of coconut oil do not need the pancreatic enzymes to be broken down, so taking coconut oil eases the strain on the pancreas. Additionally, this super fat is so easy to digest that it has been known to improve the symptoms of gallbladder disease as well. Replace other long-chain fats with coconut oil to improve gallbladder and total body health.

11. Improves Skin Issues (burns, eczema, dandruff, dermatitis, and psoriasis)
Coconut oil is wonderful as a face cleanser, moisturizer and sun screen, but also it can treat many skin disorders. The fatty acids (Caprylic and Lauric) in coconut oil reduce inflammation internally and externally and moisturize making them a great solution for all types of skin conditions. It protects the skin and has many antioxidants that make it ideal for healing the skin. Additionally, the antimicrobial properties balance out the candida or fungal sources that can cause many skin conditions.

12. Prevents Gum Disease and Tooth Decay
Oil pulling with coconut oil has been used for centuries to cleanse the mouth of bacteria and help heal periodontal disease. Coconut oil is one of the most effective oils for oil pulling due to its high concentration of antibacterial MCFA's. By swishing the oil in your mouth, the oil denatures the bacteria and sticks to it. Removing oral bacteria greatly reduces your risk of periodontal disease. If you want to heal your gums and repair your teeth, I recommend coconut oil pulling 3x a week for 20 minutes a day.

13. Prevents Osteoporosis

Oxidative stress and free radicals are the two biggest culprits of osteoporosis. Since coconut oil has such high levels of antioxidants which help fight free radicals, it is a leading natural treatment for osteoporosis. Another of the amazing coconut oil benefits is that it increases calcium absorption in the gut. Research with osteoporosis has found that coconut oil not only increases bone volume and structure in subjects, but also decreased bone loss due to osteoporosis.

14. Improves Type II Diabetes

When cells refuse to respond to insulin and no longer take in glucose for energy, then they are considered insulin resistant. The pancreas then pumps out more insulin to compensate and creates an overproduction cycle. Insulin resistance is the precursor to Type II diabetes. The MCFA's in coconut oil helps balance the insulin reactions in the cells and promote healthy digestive process. They take off the strain on the pancreas and give the body a consistent energy source that is not dependent on glucose reactions which can prevent insulin resistance and Type II diabetes.

15. Coconut Oil for Weight loss

Because of the energy creating abilities of coconut oil, it is no wonder that it is beneficial in losing weight. It helps to burn fat, decrease appetite and it studies it was especially helpful in losing belly fat. Coconut's ability to help you shed fat has been well established. A 1985 study published in the *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health* proved that a single injection of caprylic acid resulted in "initially rapid, then gradual decrease in food consumption and a parallel loss of body weight" in male rats. It might seem counterintuitive to assume that eating coconut oil (a fat) will contribute to *fat* loss, but it is actually quite logical. The key to understanding this phenomenon lays in the multidimensional ability of the MCFAs to control a variety of physiological processes.

   For example, in the 1985 study mentioned above, it was discovered that caprylic acid shows significant improvements in thyroid function, helps lower resting heart rate, and assists your body in burning fat for energy.

More recently, the Obesity Research Journal published a study from Boston University Medical School that gives us a clue why MCFAs have fat burning ability. Testing the effects that MFCAs have on fat breakdown, adipose (fatty) cells in rats were pretreated with caprylic acid. They observed that fat breakdown occurred at such a significant level that it literally mimicked the characteristics of fasting.

   Fasting, in this sense, is not to be regarded as negative, but positive in that the body uses its energy reserves most effectively and speeds up the breakdown of needless fat reserves.

In the words of the researchers who conducted this study, "Such changes could contribute, in part, to weight loss in animals and humans associated with dietary medium-chain fatty acids."

16. Building Muscle and Losing Body Fat

MCFAs aren't just good for burning fat; they are also great for building muscle. The MCFAs found in coconut are also used in popular muscle building products like Muscle Milk™. The vast majority of heavily produced supplements however, use processed forms of MCFAs. By eating actual coconuts, however, you get the "real deal." I recommend adding 3 tbsp of coconut oil to a muscle building shake daily.

17. Coconut Oil Benefits for Hair Care

If you have dandruff or dry hair coconut oil has the perfect fatty acids to help improve these conditions. You can make homemade coconut lavender shampoo to improve your hair and use straight coconut oil as an all-natural hair conditioner. To get rid of dandruff and to thicken hair massage 1 tbsp. coconut oil mixed with 10 drops of rosemary essential oil into your scalp for 3 minutes. Then shower 30 minutes later.

18. Candida and Yeast Infections

A study published in the journal of Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy found the caprylic acid and lauric acid in coconut oil were an effective natural treatment for candida albicans and yeast infections.

To effectively kill candida and treat yeast infections remove processed sugar and refined grains from your diet and consume plenty of healthy fats. Take 1 tbsp. of coconut oil 3x daily as a supplement.

19. Coconut Oil for Anti-aging

Research published in the medical journal Food and Function, shows coconut oil improves antioxidant levels and can slow aging. Coconut oil works by reducing stress on the liver and by lowering oxidative stress. Also, they found that coconut oil may support detoxification because of how it works with the liver. To naturally slow aging take 1 tbsp. of coconut oil with anti-oxidant rich berries for breakfast. You can also apply it directly to skin for additional benefits and smoothing.

20. Coconut Oil for Hormone Balance

Using coconut oil benefits your hormones as well! Coconut oil may help naturally balance hormones because it's a great source of saturated fat including lauric acid. Studies have found that coconut oil may be an excellent fat to consume during menopause and may also have positives effects on estrogen levels. To naturally balance hormones, reduce sugar and grain consumption and load up on healthy fats from coconut, avocado, flax seeds and ghee.

Coconut Oil Side Effects

There are rarely any side effects for coconut oil. Occasionally a contact allergy may occur for certain individuals that are allergic to coconuts. Some of the cleaning products created by coconut oil have been known to cause contact allergies as well, but it is not common. In fact, coconut oil is known for reducing side effects of many medications. And in studies, it reduced the symptoms and side effects of cancer treatments.

How to Take Coconut Oil

Coconut oil can be used for all cooking and baking, and you can often put a tablespoon of it in my morning smoothie. You can also apply it directly to your skin or as a carrier for **essential oils** or blends.

*WARNING – refined or processed coconut oil can be bleached, over-heated, and chemically processed to increase its shelf-life. Processing the oil changes the chemical makeup and the fats are no longer good for you.

SO INSTEAD – buy extra virgin, organic coconut oil for the greatest health benefits.

Ref: Dr. Axe-Food is Medicine