

You've no doubt noticed that coconut oil is a hot topic of conversation on everyone's lips lately. Quite literally too, as people are using it as an alternative to chapstick. You may also be aware that it is in their pantries, their smoothies, their hair, their first aid kit, their bathroom, and even in a little jar on their nightstand. What underlies this oil's recent popularity with the masses is what many believe to be the sheer benefits of coconut oil for the mind, body and soul. And it appears its not a marketing ploy. A growing amount of research confirms that adding coconut oil to your diet and your daily routine could be one of the simplest ways to improve your health, wellbeing, appearance, and even your sex life. If that isn't convincing enough, studies also show that coconut oil reduces inflammation, supports cognitive function, heart health, and boosts energy levels. Well it's really not a cure-all, and what works for others may not work for you, it still is pretty dandy to have around. With a little bit of resourcefulness and a dash of creativity, you can find several uses for coconut oil.

The very first thing on this list, before even delving into the "edible" benefits of coconut oil, has to be its moisturizing abilities. Coconut oil contains vitamin E, essential amino acids, lauric and caprylic acid which form part of the barrier function of your skin and help maintain your skin's natural flora aka "the good bugs" Why does coconut oil for skin work so well? In part, it's due to the saturated fats that help the skin stay moisturized, with the fat preventing moisture loss through the skin's pores. These fats give the skin a healthy, smooth and even tone. It's quite light as an oil so it soaks in well without feeling greasy. What better way to pamper yourself than with a DIY face mask? Try this healing mask from the blog "She Can't Eat What"? Which utilizes turmeric (known for its anti-inflammatory properties), lemon juice (to brighten with vitamin C), raw honey (which can help treat acne), and melted virgin coconut oil for extra hydration.

Gather

½ tbsp turmeric powder
½ tsp lemon juice
1 tbsp raw honey
3 tbsp extra-virgin coconut oil (gently melted)

Make

1. Grab a small bowl and mix the ingredients together, gently making a paste.
2. Apply to your face (bare and clean!) and leave for 15-20 minutes. Make sure to focus on any problem areas.
3. Rinse off with a warm dampened facecloth and feel the glow!
4. Use 2-3 times a week for the best results.

Apply to a clean face, leave on for at least 15 minutes, and relax!

Coconut oil also promotes collagen production and repairs skin cells and can hence be used as a wound healing agent. It is natural and safe for use with no known side effects or toxicity.

According to a research study published in the Journal of Cosmetic Science, the use of coconut oil on hair helps reduce protein loss in both damaged as well as undamaged hair. This oil is rich in lauric acid, has a high affinity for hair protein, and easily penetrates inside the hair shaft due to its low molecular weight. It can be applied to hair directly and used for both pre-washed, and post-washed hair grooming.

In your next at-home manicure, try rubbing CO into your cuticles. It helps keep germs at bay and will loosen up cuticles, making them easier to push back or trim.

Why purchase expensive massage oils when it's so easy to make your own? Combining coconut oil with several drops of your favorite essential oil does the job just as well. Ask your spouse to assist. It'll alleviate sore muscles while also tickling the senses.

Not only does coconut oil sound exotic it is also delicious. To date, there are several studies proving coconut oil to be one of the healthiest foods on the planet. CO uses and benefits go beyond what most people realize. Coconut oil made from copra or fresh coconut flesh is a true superfood. It's no wonder the coconut tree is considered the "tree of life" in many tropical locations. Health benefits of

coconut oil include, improving heart health by increasing the HDL cholesterol levels, promoting weight loss, improving digestion, and boosting immunity. Coconut oil contains fatty acids with potent medicinal properties. It might seem counterintuitive to assume that eating coconut oil (a fat) will contribute to fat loss, but it is actually quite logical. Because of the way our bodies metabolize CO, its energy-creating abilities and the fact it's a no-carb oil, it is no wonder that it is beneficial in losing weight. It helps burn fat and calories, decrease appetite, and in studies it was especially helpful in losing belly fat. CO is high in healthy saturated fats that have different effects than most other fats in your diet. These fats can also provide your body and brain with quick energy. Coconut oil is easy to digest and also produces a longer sustained energy and increases your metabolism. Today, many athletes use coconut oil as their source of fuel during training. You can make homemade energy fuel by mixing coconut oil, raw honey and chia seeds together. Simply put together one tablespoon of each and consume 30 minutes prior to exercise.



In the midst of the many seductive claims, we have to understand that coconut oil in no way gets the “all-you-can-eat” green light. Studies have found that 2 tablespoons (30 ml) seems to be an effective dose. This has been shown to benefit weight, reduce belly fat and improve other health markers. Consuming 2 tablespoons per day is a reasonable amount that leaves room for other healthy fats in your diet, such as nuts, extra virgin olive oil and avocados.

The taste of coconut oil is rather mild, which makes it a versatile health food that can be applied in many different ways. Generally speaking, you can use coconut oil in place of other oils (vegetable, canola, etc.) for baking and cooking. Use equivalent portions of melted coconut oil for most oils. To replace shortening with coconut oil, mix coconut oil and butter in equal proportions. Use $\frac{3}{4}$ the amount called for by a recipe. For example, if a recipe asks you to

use 2 cups of shortening, use $\frac{3}{4}$ coconut oil and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter to make a mixture totaling 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups. Use 1–2 tablespoons to cook vegetables, eggs, meat or fish. Drizzle melted coconut oil on air-popped popcorn. Use it to coat poultry or meat before rubbing with seasonings. You can consume coconut oil in coffee or tea, mixed with your yogurt or oatmeal, in your smoothies, or simply eat it by the spoonful. There is no “wrong” way to eat coconut oil. It all depends on your personal preference and the easiest way for you to add it to your diet.

Coconut oil's popularity has led to supermarkets stocking a multitude of brands and various types of coconut oil products. It's the perfect addition to a paleo or ketogenic diet therefore it's not surprising there's a ton of options. When purchasing coconut oil, it's important to opt for cold-pressed, unrefined, virgin coconut oil that has been ethically sourced. As with most natural products, the key words you want to look for and avoid are chemically processed, hydrogenated, and deodorized. Unrefined coconut oil is often referred to as “virgin” coconut oil. Technically, coconut oil by nature is refined, because oil, of course, doesn't grow on a tree, coconuts do. Still, “unrefined” or virgin coconut oil is a good choice, as the oil is extracted from fresh coconut meat rather than dried.

Remember, you don't need to switch to CO completely because then you will lose the added nutrients from traditional oils and dairy products. You should consult your physician or health care professional before adding coconut oil to your diet to determine if it is right for your needs. Pure coconut oil benefits are immense, and they don't stop with these health benefits. Be sure to always have some on hand. You never know when you might need it.

May 2019