

I'm often asked if the health benefits of coconut oil are good for your heart, and my answer is a resounding yes. The ordinary [coconut](#)—known for its sweet milk, great fiber and ability to conk people on the heads in Marx Brothers movies—can do your heart good, and a lot more.

Many people shun coconut oil because it's high in saturated fat, which is true. But coconut oil is also the oil that is least vulnerable to oxidative stress and free radical formation—in fact it's probably the safest oil to use in all types of cooking.



Coconut Oil and Cholesterol

What about coconut oil and your cholesterol? Coconut oil contains medium-chain fatty acids (MCFAs)—not the long-chain fatty acids found in most oils—so it's heart healthy. In fact, those MCFAs have an effect similar to [omega-3 fatty acids](#), so they make blood platelets less sticky.

Researchers also demonstrated that coconut's MCFAs can neutralize and kill many microorganisms, bacteria and viruses that are responsible for periodontal disease, herpes and even bladder infections. Remember, [oral bacteria that can cause dental disease](#) can enter the bloodstream via the gum line, cause inflammation and eventually contribute to atherosclerosis. Plus, research has shown that the health benefits of coconut oil can help to improve memory.

Incorporating the Health Benefits of Coconut Oil Into Your Diet

- **Use it for cooking.** Just remember not to heat it to the point of smoking. Any oil, including coconut oil, can produce toxic byproducts when overheated.
- **Mix it with olive oil in your salad.** You might even douse your steamed vegetables with a few teaspoons of it.
- **Eat coconut or other products like coconut milk.** Coconut milk can be used to make shakes and smoothies. You can also use it in a hot or cold cereal, or pour it over seasonal organic blueberries, raspberries and strawberries. I like to bake fish in coconut milk to keep it moist and enhance the flavor.
- **Or try coconut water.** I add it to my favorite [fruit and veggie juice mix](#).

But if you're not nuts about eating coconut, you can apply coconut oil to your skin. Remember, the skin absorbs almost anything you put on it. Similar to almond oil, coconut oil can really enhance a great massage. Coconut oil is also a great way to treat dried, cracked soles of the feet—and even foot fungus. It also helps to control dandruff, and improves the texture of your hair.



Heart health benefits of coconut oil

This article originally appeared on [Dr. Sinatra's website](#).