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Coconut oil, like any oil, is best in moderation

Coconut oil is a healthy fat to add to your diet. It contains several properties, as many oils do, that are beneficial to your good health. However, keep in mind all oils are high in fat and should still be used in moderation. That's the key to good health: variety and moderation – not overdoing it on coconut oil!

All foods contain differing properties and varying quantities of nutrients and none should be omitted or prioritized. In the case of fat intake, a healthy diet should contain a healthy balance (equal amounts, preferably) of the saturated, polyunsaturated, and monounsaturated fats. Coconut oil is high in saturated fat. Even though it contains lauric acid (a healthier, medium chain saturated fat) that the body burns more readily than long-chain saturated fats, coconut oil is still high in calories and fat. If you are eating this oil out of balance of your caloric needs, and out of balance from other types of necessary fats, you will gain weight and possibly affect your good health in other negative ways. *Any* food eaten out of balance can reflect in your body becoming out of balance.

Fifty percent of the fat in coconut oil is lauric acid, found in few other foods and can be used by the body to help boost the immune system. Coconut oil also has a large amount of medium-chain fatty acids, which isn't stored in adipose tissue as readily as long-chain fatty acids are. This is part of the reason why we thought to look at coconut oil as a weight-loss aid. However the few small studies done so far haven't shown any significant amount of weight loss or improved body mass index (BMI). Incidentally, short-term studies have also suggested medium-chain fatty acids, such as lauric acid, do not raise serum low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol as much as long-chain fatty acids do. However, more long-term studies will have to be done to confirm this finding.

Coconut oil has more saturated fat than lard does. One tablespoon of coconut oil offers 14 grams of fat (12 grams saturated) and 116 calories. Consuming too much of any oil increases your caloric intake — and if those calories are in excess of what you need, you'll increase your body fat stores. Because it is a saturated fat, coconut oil is therefore a good choice if you are cooking foods at a higher temperature. Saturated fats have a higher 'smoke point,' as compared to monounsaturated fats like olive oil and can tolerate higher temperatures without affecting its nutritional value or flavor.

Ignore all the hype and use common sense. Yes, coconut oil is a healthy addition to your diet – but it shouldn't be the only one. Other oils (like olive, avocado, and almond oil) contribute many healthy properties too – including properties we aren't yet aware of. Add a variety of fat sources to your diet, but always be mindful of moderation.

Eating coconut oil won't guarantee you'll lose weight, improve your health or your cholesterol levels. The dietary way to improve your health and maintain a healthy body weight is to avoid eating to excess and choose from a wide variety of healthy foods.

Eve Lees is a health writer for several publications and was a Fitness, Nutrition & Wellness Counsellor for over 30 years.