

The Truth about Coconut Oil

Adapted from <http://www.healthcastle.com/coconut-saturated-heart.shtml>



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Note: To reflect this year's National Nutrition Month theme, 'Nutrition: It's a Matter of Fact', the Eat Smart newsletters for the month of March will focus on nutrition myths that can trip you up.

Despite its extreme high level of saturated fat, coconut oil supporters have been promoting coconut oil as a health food. Online sources of nutrition information such as Dr. Mercola's *Optimal Wellness Center* (www.mercola.com) claim that coconut oil can promote heart health, support your immune system, and even assist with weight loss! *Could this really be true?*

TRUTH: Saturated fat is bad – regardless of the source! Saturated fats are primarily found in animal products such as meat, dairy and eggs. Some plant foods are also high in saturated fats such as coconut and palm oils.

- The FDA ordered Dr. Mercola to stop making illegal health claims regarding coconut oil (<http://www.fda.gov/cder/warn/cyber/2005/CL134e.pdf>, <http://www.quackwatch.org/11Ind/mercola.html>)
- A 2006 Heart Research Institute study published in the Journal of American College of Cardiology warned that a high content of saturated fat (regardless of source) put people at risk for having heart attack or stroke (<http://www.healthcastle.com/coconut-saturated-heart.shtml>).

BUT NOT ALL FATS ARE BAD: While limiting saturated and trans fats is recommended, certain heart-healthy fats (polyunsaturated & monounsaturated) are necessary for basic bodily functions. Sources of these fats include:

- Foods: avocados, nuts and nut butters, fish (salmon, trout, herring) and flaxseed and flax oils.
- Vegetable oils: olive, peanut, safflower, canola and soy

REMEMBER – always get nutrition information from credible sources! Here are a few:

- www.mypyramid.gov (2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans)
- www.eatright.org (website of the National Dietetic Association)
- www.healthcastle.com (nutrition information website written by dietitians)



The bottom line on coconut oil: saturated fat is bad – regardless of the source – and should be eaten in moderation if at all.

