

Top 3 health benefits of coconut milk

Research suggests that coconut milk has three main health benefits. Below, we describe the effects on weight loss, heart health, and the immune system.

1. Weight loss

Coconut milk contains medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs), which researchers have linked with weight loss. MCTs stimulate energy through a process called thermogenesis, or heat production.

Some studies indicate that MCTs work to reduce body weight and waist size. They may also balance out unstable gut microbiota. A lack of this stability may play a role in developing obesity.

A 2015 [study](#) in overweight men found that consuming MCTs at breakfast led to reduced food intake later in the day. Findings of a 2018 study suggest that MCTs increase insulin sensitivity, and many researchers believe that this sensitivity promotes weight loss. Insulin is an essential hormone that breaks down glucose and controls blood sugar levels.

2. Heart health

Research has linked diets rich in saturated fat with high cholesterol and an increased risk of heart disease.

Some people may not consider coconut milk to be heart-healthy, because of its high fat content.

However, different sources of saturated fats may affect the body in different ways. Also, genetics play a role in how a person metabolizes saturated fats and the extent to which these fats impact health. Scant research has investigated the effects of coconut milk on cholesterol levels. However, a substantial body of research has explored the effects of coconut oil.

One study found that coconut oil did not significantly increase levels of "bad cholesterol," or low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, but that it did increase levels of "good cholesterol," or high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL).

It is important to note that the study period was short, only 4 weeks, and that the research was lacking in controls.

HDL cholesterol protects the heart and removes LDL cholesterol from the blood. It carries LDL cholesterol to the liver, which breaks it down, and the body eventually eliminates it.

While coconut oil may not raise levels of LDL cholesterol, coconut-based products are high in fat and calories. People should only consume them in moderation.

Boosts immune system

Coconuts contain a lipid called lauric acid, and many researchers believe that lauric acid can support the immune system.

Some findings indicate that lauric acid has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

In a study of the antimicrobial effects of lauric acid from coconuts, the researchers isolated various bacterial strains and exposed them to lauric acid in petri dishes.

They found that lauric acid effectively inhibited the growth of *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

Other researchers found that lauric acid triggers apoptosis, cell death, in breast and endometrial cancer cells. The findings suggest that this acid inhibits cancer cell growth by stimulating certain receptor proteins that regulate the growth of cells.