

Why Coconut Oil Really is Healthy



Despite the American Heart Association's Views

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Coconut oil increases HDL, large LDL and reduces small dense LDL. The overall effect is that coconut oil reduces the cholesterol ratio, thus lowering the risk of heart disease.

The anti-saturated fat fanatics are at it again, going after coconut oil and other healthy saturated fats promoting the use of polyunsaturated vegetable oils and statin drugs as the solution to the worldwide heart disease epidemic.

In June 2017 the journal *Circulation* published an online article prepared by the American Heart Association (AHA) titled "Dietary Fats and Cardiovascular Disease." The focus of the article was to reiterate the AHA's longstanding position against the use of saturated fats, recommending that we replace them with polyunsaturated fats, which they stated, are as effective as cholesterol-lowering statins in reducing the risk of heart disease.

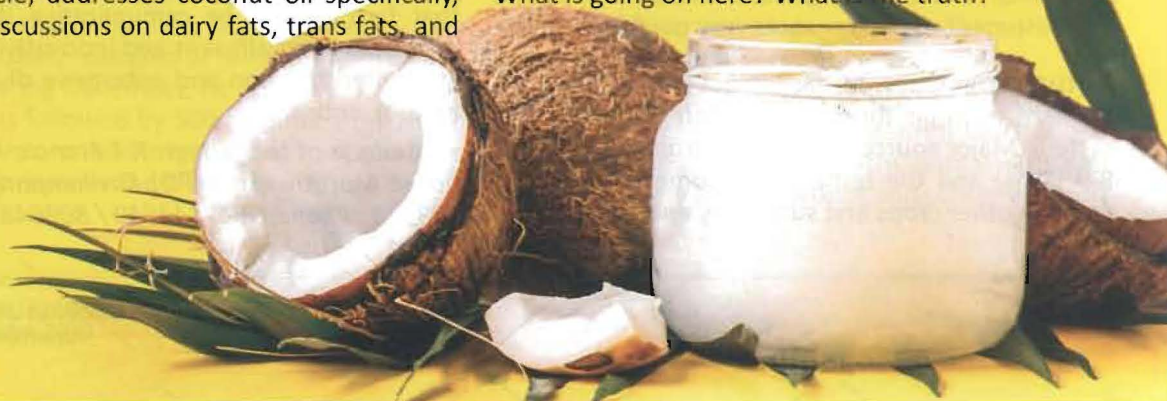
This article was not the result of any new study but simply a statement of position by the AHA, supported by select (cherry picked) studies. The article demonized all saturated fats as bad because they increase LDL cholesterol, the so-called bad cholesterol, which in turn supposedly increases the risk of heart disease. Only half of one page, out of the 24 page article, addresses coconut oil specifically, along with discussions on dairy fats, trans fats, and

others. The article was not about coconut oil, it was about saturated fats. However, the editors at USA Today saw it as a way to stir up controversy by attacking the wholesome image of coconut oil with the attention grabbing headline, "Coconut Oil Isn't Healthy, It's Never Been Healthy."

Coconut oil has been gaining ground as one of the premiere healthy fats. The editors of USA Today knew that a widely perceived healthy fat that was now being labeled as unhealthy by the AHA would generate huge interest, and sell a lot of papers. And they were right!

Immediately following publication of the article, other publications quickly jumped on the bandwagon and started producing their own shocking stories with headlines such as "Coconut Oil As Unhealthy As Beef Fat" and "Coconut Oil May Not Be As Healthy As You Think."

These articles stirred up a swarm of confusion. Over the past few years numerous new studies, articles, and books have sung the praises of coconut oil and many people, including doctors and nutritionists have recommend it as one of the good fats. Now, all of a sudden, according to the media, the AHA is declaring it unfit for human consumption. What is going on here? What is the truth?



These articles are examples of “fake news” perpetuated by editors solely to attract attention to their publications. Did you know that 50 percent of the media headlines about medical studies are deceptively wrong? And that these headlines don’t accurately match the content or conclusions of the medical journal articles on which they are based. This fact is from a review published in the New England Journal of Medicine. Today editors are often interested more in sensationalism than in reporting the facts and, consequently, we get a lot of fake health news misleading the public. This is the case with the attack on coconut oil. The AHA article was not specifically about coconut oil, it was a statement of their position on saturated fats.

The AHA has always maintained the stance that saturated fats are bad and increase cholesterol levels, which they claim increases the risk of heart disease. They argue that all saturated fats raise total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol and, therefore, increase the risk of heart disease. What they conveniently fail to mention is that total cholesterol is not an accurate indicator of heart disease risk. They also don’t mention that saturated fats, including coconut oil, increase HDL cholesterol, the good cholesterol that reduces the risk of heart disease.

Another fact they tried to downplay is that there are actually two types of LDL cholesterol: one that is small and dense, and another that is large and buoyant. The large buoyant LDL cholesterol is also a form of good cholesterol. It is the type of cholesterol that is used to make bile, hormones, and vitamin D; it is essential not only for good health, but for life itself. The small dense LDL, on the other hand, is the type of cholesterol that becomes oxidized, and all oxidized lipids are unhealthy and can contribute to heart disease.

Coconut oil increases HDL, large LDL, and reduces small dense LDL. The overall effect is that coconut oil reduces the cholesterol ratio, thus lowering the risk of heart disease. The cholesterol ratio is recognized as being a far more accurate indicator of heart disease risk than total cholesterol. Coconut oil may increase total cholesterol in some people, but it does so by increasing good LDL and HDL, not the bad LDL.

Blood triglycerides is another independent risk factor for heart disease. In fact, they seem to have a greater influence on heart disease risk than cholesterol. Sugar and refined carbohydrates increase triglycerides, while coconut oil reduces triglycerides, thus again lowering risk of heart

disease. Did the AHA report mention this? No, the authors seem to have forgotten to say anything about this important point. In fact, the AHA article seemed to leave out a lot of important information such as the fact that polyunsaturated vegetable oils increase the small, bad LDL cholesterol and increase the risk of cancer, neurological disorders (including muscular degeneration), and autoimmune disease. Or that coconut oil can prevent, and possibly even reverse, these conditions.

The following authors/articles have come out with statements regarding coconut oil and heart disease.

Dr. Anthony Pearson, a cardiologist at St. Luke's Hospital in St. Louis, provides an excellent rebuttal to the AHA article in his article, “Beware Of More Misinformation From The American Heart Association On Coconut Oil and Saturated Fats.”

Bestselling author of *Eat Fat, Get Thin*, Mark Hyman, MD, weighs in on the controversy in his article “Is Coconut Oil Bad for Your Cholesterol?”.

Diana Rogers, RD, explains “Why Coconut Oil Won’t Kill You, But Listening to the American Heart Association Might!”

Mary Newport, MD, who used coconut oil to successfully treat her Alzheimer’s affected husband, comments on Facebook in an article titled “Response to AHA Advisory Committee on Dietary Fats and Cardiovascular Disease.”

Gary Taubes, an investigative science and health journalist and bestselling author, gives a detailed analysis in “Vegetable oils, (Francis) Bacon, Bing Crosby, and the American Heart Association.”

Consuming coconut oil lowers risk of heart disease and stroke:

Study shows

There is a love-hate relationship between coconut oil and the medical community. Many doctors and nutritionists extol it for its many healthy benefits. Best selling author Dr. Joseph Mercola claims that coconut oil is the healthiest oil you can eat. Neurologist Dr. David Perlmutter, the author of *Grain Brain*, recommends coconut oil as a means to improve brain health. Dr. Mark Hyman says it as a health food and weight loss aid in his bestselling book *Eat Fat, Get Thin*.

However, others claim that its high saturated fat content makes it unhealthy. Saturated fats, they say,

raise blood cholesterol, which in turn, increases the risk of heart disease. The American Heart Association (AHA) has been leading the attack against coconut oil. In a widely publicized report published in 2017 the AHA took a stand against all saturated fats, including coconut oil. They condemned saturated fats as a major risk for heart disease and recommended polyunsaturated vegetable oils as a healthier choice.

As soon as the report was released the media went wild churning out reports condemning coconut oil as one of bad fats, further perpetuating the myth that coconut oil and other saturated fats are unhealthy.

According to the AHA, dietary fat intake should be limited to 30 percent of total calories consumed and saturated fats should be limited to no more than 7 percent. Most of the fat in the diet should come from polyunsaturated vegetable oils because they have been shown to lower total cholesterol. To them, it's all about cholesterol.

Let's assume that cholesterol is as important as the AHA claims it is in determining heart disease risk, does that make coconut oil dangerous?

While some saturated fats do raise total cholesterol, they also tend to raise HDL cholesterol – the so-called good cholesterol that is believed to reduce the risk of heart disease. In fact, the rise in total cholesterol is due, in part, to the increase in HDL – which is a good thing.

So, does coconut oil improve or worsen cholesterol values?

To cut through all the rhetoric of the opposing viewpoints producers at the British Broadcasting Corporation's television series "Trust Me I'm a Doctor" decided to sponsor a study to get to the bottom of the controversy. The Trust Me team contacted Kay-Tee Khaw, MD, PhD and Nita Forouhi, MD, PhD, both eminent researchers at the University of Cambridge to conduct the study.

The study was designed to observe what effect eating different types of fat would have on cholesterol levels. Three different fats were compared in the study: coconut oil, which is 92 percent saturated fat; unsalted butter, which is 66 percent saturated; and olive oil which is 14 percent saturated and 77 percent monounsaturated.

A total of 94 volunteers, aged between 50 and 75 who had no history of diabetes or heart disease, were recruited to participate in the study. The volunteers were randomly assigned to one of three groups, with

each group assigned to add one of the three fats into their diet. Every day for four weeks, they were asked to consume 50 grams of their assigned oil – that's equivalent to about 3 tablespoons.

Before starting on their new high-fat regime blood samples were taken to get baseline measurements, focusing mainly on their LDL and HDL cholesterol levels. LDL cholesterol is often referred to as the "bad" cholesterol as it makes up most of the cholesterol in our blood.

As expected, the butter eaters saw an average rise in their LDL levels of about 10 percent, which was almost matched by a 5 percent rise in their HDL levels. Taken together the overall effect has a negligible effect on heart disease risk.

Those consuming olive oil had a small, non-significant reduction in LDL cholesterol but saw a 5 percent increase in HDL, supporting its health healthy reputation.

The big surprise was coconut oil. Not only was there no rise in LDL levels, which was what the researchers were expecting (and what the AHA claims it would do), but there was a particularly large rise in HDL, by an impressive 15 percent. The people consuming the coconut oil had significantly reduced their risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke.

The researchers were surprised by the results. Dr. Khaw confessed that she didn't understand why coconut oil provided better numbers than even olive oil. "I have no real idea," she said.

"Perhaps it is because the main saturated fat in coconut oil is lauric acid and lauric acid may have different biological impacts on blood lipids to other fatty acids. The evidence for that comes mainly from animals, so it was fascinating to see this effect in free-living humans."^[1]

This study provided further evidence that people consuming coconut oil are at reduced risk of developing heart disease, despite claims from the AHA who base their prejudice of coconut solely on its saturated fat content and not on actual studies.

This is not the only study to show that coconut oil reduces the risk of heart disease. Animal studies have clearly shown that coconut oil has the potential to reduce atherosclerosis and prevent, and perhaps even reverse, cardiovascular disease.^[2-3]

Although the AHA recommends polyunsaturated vegetable oils as a healthier choice over coconut



oil, human clinical trials show that in comparison to polyunsaturated oil, coconut oil does not promote cardiovascular disease even after long-term use.^[4]

Other human studies show that coconut oil reduces all of the common risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease such as waist circumference, body mass index, blood pressure, cholesterol ratio, blood triglycerides, blood glucose, and inflammation, among others.^[5-10]

Taken together, these studies strongly support the cardioprotective nature of coconut oil. No drug, dietary supplement, herb, or low-fat diet has been able to match the combined cardioprotective effects obtained from the regular use of coconut oil. If coconut oil was a pharmaceutical product invented in a chemist's laboratory it would be promoted as the world's most effective cardioprotective agent of all time. But since it is a natural product that cannot be patented and exploited and since it competes with a multitude of highly profitable drugs, it is condemned as dangerous.

These and many additional studies not referenced here were suspiciously ignored by the AHA's report on saturated fats. Was this just a negligent oversight, or was it a preconceived plan to bury studies that conflict with the AHA's viewpoint? Since the committee members who determine the AHA recommendations are all established academics, it appears it wasn't due to shoddy research, but more likely a conflict of interest – a common problem when non-profit organizations take money from big businesses that have an interest at stake.

The AHA's overemphasis on cholesterol as the major contributing factor to heart disease and lack of acknowledging the importance to other factors, such as excessive sugar consumption, could be leading us in the wrong direction.

References

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