



Fake new alert: The American Heart Association proclaims coconut oil unhealthy

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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 premier 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

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 long standing 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

a statement of their position on saturated fats. The AHA has always maintained the stand 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 tend 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, it seems 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 report also failed to mention that populations that use coconut oil as their primary source of fat have the lowest rates of heart disease in the world. The report failed to mention a lot of important facts, including the financial associations of the authors. I examined the original article and could find no

financial disclosure that generally accompanies scholarly articles. Which strongly suggests that the authors may have financial ties with the vegetable oil or pharmaceutical industries. Indeed, Dr Barbara Roberts, a cardiologist, discusses the financial connection of the authors in her article here : <http://www.thedailybeast.com/theheart-associations-junk-science-diet>.

The AHA should not be allowed to profit off their own dietary advice, but apparently they do which makes their recommendations questionable. The article entitled "Controversial Pharma CEO To Chair AHA Charity Ball" by Larry Husten, March 24, 2017 (www.cardiobrief.org) also explains about the financial relationship between the AHA and the pharmaceutical industry. This is just one example of the conflict of interest with the AHA. It's no wonder why the AHA is so much against coconut oil and other health promoting saturated fats.

I am not alone in saying the AHA is misguided on this issue. The following links go to several others who have come out with statements regarding coconut oil and heart disease.

Dr. Anthony Pearson, a cardiologist at St. Luke's Hospital in St. Louis in his article: "Beware of More Misinformation from the American Heart Association on Coconut Oil and Saturated Fats" (<https://theskepticalcardiologist.com/2017/06/18/beware-of-more-misinformation-from-the-american-heart-association-on-coconut-oil-and-saturated-fats/>), provides an excellent rebuttal to the AHA article. Bestselling author of *Eat Fat, Get Thin*, Mark Hyman, MD, weighs in on the controversy. (<http://drhyman.com/blog/2016/04/06/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! (<http://sustainabledish.com/coconut-oil-wont-kill-listening-american-heart-association-might/>) Mary Newport, MD, who used coconut oil to successfully treat her Alzheimer's affected husband, comments. (<https://www.facebook.com/CoconutOilandAlzheimers/posts/898200733651342>) Gary Taubes, an investigative science and health journalist and bestselling author, gives a detailed analysis. (<http://garytaubes.com/vegetable-oils-francis-bacon-bing-crosby-and-the-american-heart-association/>)

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