

# American Heart Association says that Coconut Oil isn't Healthy

By Adriana Bello / Friday, 16 Jun 2017 08:16PM

**A new report from the American Heart Association (AHA) claims that coconut oil may not be as healthy as previously thought. The organization released their updated fat guidelines, and they are urging Americans to remove coconut oil from their diets, as they say that it is extremely high in saturated fats.**

The AHA noted that while it is true that most of saturated fats in our diets come from animal products and byproducts, plant-based products, such as coconut oil and palm oil, contain saturated fats too.



Coconut oil is usually sold as a health food, and some advocates say that the fat in it may be healthier for people than other saturated fats. However, the AHA says there are no studies to support that claim.

## **American Heart Association says coconut oil is not as healthy as people think**

The AHA reviewed existing data and reiterated that saturated fats are bad. According to the organization, the report was needed because “meta-analyses” of observational studies, as well as randomized clinical trials, have come to discordant conclusions about the relationship between saturated fats and risk of cardiovascular disease, which they believe is causing confusion among people.

There are three types of fats: unsaturated, saturated, and trans. Fats are a slew of different molecules, and they are stacked in three prongs. Unsaturated fat molecules' prongs are curly due to the presence of a double bond, which means they are liquid at room temperature. Saturated fat molecules' prongs are straight, which makes them stack into solids. Trans fats, on the other hand, have the double bond but have been straightened –forming solids- through a process known as hydrogenation.

The fats that people usually consume such as butter, coconut oil, and olive oil, are a mixture of different fat molecules, saturated and unsaturated. Coconut oil, for instance, has plenty of saturated fat molecules, but its melting point is slightly above room temperature.

**The AHA reported that coconut oil has more saturated fats than butter, beef fat, and pork lard**

According to the AHA, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the world, and it accounts for 17.3 million deaths per year. The Association believes that preventive treatment that can reduce cardiovascular disease by even a small percentage can substantially reduce, both nationally and globally, the number of people who develop this disease and the costs of caring for them.



According to the AHA, coconut oil contains 82 percent of saturated fats. A diet that is high in saturated fats can cause a person to develop cardiovascular disease. According to the AHA, coconut oil contains 82 percent of saturated fats, which is a larger content than that of butter (63 percent), beef fat (50 percent) and pork lard (39 percent). They also noted that just like other saturated fats, coconut oil can increase bad cholesterol.

The AHA said that studies show that replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats can lower cholesterol in the same magnitude as cholesterol-lowering drugs.

“We want to set the record straight on why well-conducted scientific research overwhelmingly supports limiting saturated fat in the diet to prevent diseases of the heart and blood vessels,” said Dr. Frank Sacks, lead author of the AHA report, according to the BBC.

### **Replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats may be the way to go**

The AHA examined several scientific studies from people who replaced saturated fat with other foods in their diet. They noted that the main confusion came from the fact that the studies in which saturated fats were replaced with carbohydrates saw fewer benefits. The AHA said that those scientific studies that replaced saturated fats with unsaturated fats found a slight lowered cardiovascular disease risk. However, the organization did not say that eating more saturated fats will increase your risk.

Gizmodo reports that only a few studies in the AHA report dealt with coconut oil specifically. The large-scale trials do not clarify what kind of saturated fats they looked at for the studies. However, one of the large-scale trials was conducted with data from patients at a Finnish hospital, where coconut oil wouldn't be the most consumed saturated fat, while meat and butter would likely be more present in the patients' diets. The coconut oil studies that the AHA report does include show that it raises both HDL –what people call good- cholesterol and LDL – or bad- cholesterol.

The studies did not link eating more coconut oil to heart disease, but they did link it to a changing cholesterol metric. Based on this, we can conclude that coconut oil might not be as bad as the AHA puts it, but it does contain plenty of saturated fats, and just like other fats of this kind, it's important to regulate the quantities in which you consume them. The AHA recommends that people should not try to lower their total fat intake, but instead, they suggest replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat, also combined with a healthier lifestyle.



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