

# Nutrition Times

February 2020 Nutrition Services



## The Scoop on Coconut Oil

Coconut oil is often marketed as a healthy fat that is good for weight loss, cholesterol, heart disease, Alzheimers, and more. However, there is no good evidence to support any of these claims. Does that mean you need to stop eating coconut oil? No, but know the facts. Below are some truths about coconut oil.

### What does the science say?

Health claims for coconut oil are based on studies of medium chain triglycerides (MCT). But MCT oil is not the same thing as coconut oil. Coconut oil is only about 14% MCT. To get the benefits of the MCT, an adult would need about 10 tablespoons of coconut oil. Eating this much is not healthy.

### Coconut oil is saturated fat

Coconut oil is about 90% saturated fat. Saturated fats are solid at room temperature. They increase your bad cholesterol (LDL) which can block your blood vessels and cause heart attacks or strokes. Saturated fats are found in animal products like meat, cheese, cream, lard and butter. Palm and coconut oils are also saturated.

**Health Canada recommends limiting your intake of saturated fat to 20 grams per day.** One tablespoon of coconut oil has about 12 grams of saturated fat; more than half of your day's intake.

### When is coconut oil useful?

- ✓ It works well for frying foods as it has a high smoke point.
- ✓ Unrefined coconut oil (also called virgin coconut oil) has a richer flavour. However, use refined oil when cooking at high temperatures.
- ✓ It can be useful in baking when you want a 'nutty' flavour.
- ✓ It has a long shelf life and can be kept for up to one year without going rancid.

### Bottom line for coconut oil

Do you have to give it up? No, but use in moderation. If you enjoy the taste of coconut oil, use it in small amounts just like any other saturated fat. For example, if you like a little half and half in a cup of coffee, or if you prefer a bit of butter instead of margarine on the mashed potatoes you have at holiday celebrations; then use it. But don't eat half a pound of butter a day. And don't buy a gallon of coconut oil to add to everything you eat.

To keep your heart healthy, choose unsaturated fats where you can.

### Choose More of These:

#### Monounsaturated Fats Polyunsaturated Fats

- Vegetable oils such as olive, canola, or corn oils
- Non-hydrogenated (soft) margarines
- Fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines
- Nuts and seeds such as almonds, walnuts or sunflower seeds
- Avocados



### Choose:

- Lean and extra lean meats
- Skinless chicken
- Lower fat milk and yogurt (0 – 2% MF (milk fat))
- Lower fat cheese (under 20% MF)



### Choose Less of These:

#### Saturated Fat

- Butter
- Cream
- Cheese
- Coconut oil
- Coconut oil
- Highly processed meats and deep-fried foods
- Lard
- Shortening
- Fatty meat
- Poultry skin
- Palm oil



### Try these healthy swaps

- Use nut butters on your toast instead of butter or cream cheese
- Use olive oil instead of butter on bread or rolls. Add flavour with balsamic vinegar.
- Replace hard margarine, butter, lard, or coconut oil in cooking and baking with soft margarine or vegetable oils.
- Make your own hummus dip with olive oil instead of spinach dip made with mayo.

## Upcoming Nutrition Classes (most classes are free)

### Brooks:

For upcoming classes visit: [ahsbrooksnutrition.eventbrite.ca](https://ahsbrooksnutrition.eventbrite.ca)

### Medicine Hat:

**Infant Nutrition:** Information on feeding babies 0 to 12 months.  
**Mon. Feb 3 or March 23, 2020, 2:45 – 4:00 p.m.**

Register: 403-502-1411 or at [ahsmedhatnutrition.eventbrite.ca](https://ahsmedhatnutrition.eventbrite.ca)

### Lethbridge:

**Baby Steps Infant Nutrition** Information on feeding babies 0-12 months.  
Ongoing. Register 403-388-6668.

**Alberta Healthy Living Program:** Classes are ongoing throughout South Zone to help manage chronic conditions. Topics include Diabetes, Weight Management, Stress Management, Healthy Eating to Reduce your Risk, Emotional Eating and more. For information on sessions available go to: [bit.ly/2CAfSnN](https://bit.ly/2CAfSnN)

To register call: **Lethbridge 403-388-6654: Medicine Hat 403-529-8969: Brooks 403-793-6659**



## Contact

If you have questions, contact your local Registered Dietitian at Community Health Services:

Medicine Hat	403-502-8200
Brooks	403-501-3300
Lethbridge	403-388-6666

For more information on this or other nutrition topics, go to [www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca](http://www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca)

