

Coconut Oil for Your Pets



The Facts

Coconut oil is a food grade oil and has a long history of safe and effective use as a food supplement for both humans and animals. According to the Coconut Research Centre, [1] coconut oil is described as the 'healthiest oil on earth' and has been used to treat a wide range of health conditions. It is extracted from the coconut meat of matured coconuts and is liquid in warm temperatures and solid at room temperature.

Coconut oil provides an immediate source of energy. It is 90% saturated fat, mostly from medium chain triglycerides. (MCT's) We are increasingly aware that not all saturated fats are bad and it is these unique medium chain triglycerides, which give this amazing oil many of its health benefits for your pets, including immune, digestion, skin and metabolic support. Medium chain triglycerides are not stored as fat in the body, but are utilised immediately by the liver as a source of energy. Therefore adding coconut oil routinely to your pet's meal, not only boosts metabolism and speeds fat loss but also creates sustained energy release.

Coconut oil has anti-microbial properties. Roughly half the fat in coconut oil is lauric acid, (found in mothers milk) followed by capric acid, caprylic acid, myristic acid and palmitic acid. Lauric acid, converts to monolaurin which is anti-microbial and can therefore support the immune system and destroy viruses, bacteria and fungi. Capric and caprylic acids have similar properties to lauric acid and are known for their anti-fungal effects.

Coconut oil may help protect the cells from damage. It contains a vitamin E compound called Tocotrienol. This is an antioxidant which appears to support arterial health and nerve cells and in one study, was found to reduce stroke damage in dogs [2].

Coconut oil is very easy for your pet to digest, absorb and process and regular feeding of this healthy oil may provide the following benefits:

Digestion

- Supports digestion and absorption of fat soluble vitamins and nutrients.
- Reduces bad breath.
- May be helpful in conditions including colitis.
- Aids the elimination of hair balls.
- Soothes and supports the gut and aids the passing of food.

Skin and Teeth

When applied topically:

- Helps to condition the skin and coat.
- Supports healing of dry cracked paw pads, flaky nails and chapped noses.
- Reduces doggy odour.
- Moisturises dry flaky skin and supports the lipid barrier.
- Soothes skin irritations and skin allergies.
- Helps prevent and treat yeast and fungal infections.
- Promotes the healing of hot spots, wounds, cuts, bites and stings.
- Can be used to clean gums and teeth.

Immune Support and Metabolic Support

- Contains anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-viral and anti-parasitic properties that help prevent infections.
- Helps reduce inflammation [3].
- Soothes the throat when the animal has a cough.
- Helps to support hormone balance and normal blood sugar levels.
- Improves energy and metabolism.
- Increases fat burning and helps support a healthy body weight in overweight pets.
- Supports brain health.



How to Use Coconut Oil for Your Pet

As a Food Supplement

It is important to add coconut oil to your pet's food **slowly**, since it will take some time for your pet's digestive system to adjust to the addition of a new food supplement. Too much too soon could cause diarrhoea or a greasy stool.

Dosage: The recommended dosage for daily maintenance is approximately **half a teaspoon for every 5 kg or 10 pounds body weight each day**.

You will want to start with half the recommended amount for the first several days, especially if your pet has a sensitive digestive system. If your pet appears to have a reaction or appears uncomfortable after introducing coconut oil, then stop for a few days and re-introduce VERY SLOWLY.

To treat a specific condition, the dosage can be increased to 1 teaspoon for every 5 pounds body weight, but again, just increase very slowly.



For Topical Use

Coconut oil can be applied directly to your animal's skin or coat. No dilution is necessary. There is a saying that if you can't eat it then don't put it on your skin. Since you can eat coconut oil, it is safe for use on your pet's skin and

coat. Using a clean spoon put a small amount into the palm of a clean hand and apply locally to dry or irritated areas of the animal's skin. Allow this to soak in for 5-10 minutes. Excess oil can be removed with a quick water rinse or a light shampoo.

Give your pet a coconut oil skin treatment as recommended by holistic vet Dr Karen Becker [4].

Coconut oil can reduce skin flaking and improve the integrity of the skin, making it more resistant to yeasts and bacteria.

- Apply the coconut oil to areas of clean skin, just like a mask.
- Allow about 5 minutes for the coconut oil to absorb into the animal's skin.
- Then do a light shampoo and a rinse.

Notice how soft and healthy your pet's skin feels.

Use In Home-made Pet Treats

Substitute the butter/fat or oil recommended in the recipe, for the equivalent amount of coconut oil.



Which Coconut Oil to Use?

There are many brands to choose from and not all types are healthy. You need to choose a coconut oil that is not refined, bleached

or deodorized. Refined coconut oil is made from dried coconut meat, which has been treated with heat and chemicals and lacks many of the benefits of unrefined coconut oil.

The better choices of coconut oil are those which state they are:

- **Cold pressed** extracted at the lowest possible temperature, avoiding heat which degrades oils of their nutritional benefits in addition to exposing the oil to toxins.
- **Unbleached**
- **Virgin**
- **Organic**

Do give coconut oil a try with your pets. It is natural and offers so many benefits to help optimise their health. But as with any other supplements, please do not use this to treat an illness or condition in your pet, without consulting your pet's veterinarian.

Storage

After use, close lid tightly. Store in a dry place away from direct sunlight.

Sources:

1. Coconut Research Centre. (2004) Coconut. (*Cocos Nucifera*.) The Tree of Life. [Online] Available at: <http://www.coconutresearchcenter.org/>
2. Rink C et al. (2011) "Tocotrienol vitamin E protects against preclinical canine ischaemic stroke by inducing arteriogenesis." *J Cereb Blood Flow Metab.* 31.11. pp.2218-2230 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21673716>
3. Intaphuak S, Khonsung P, Panthong A. (2010) Anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antipyretic activities of virgin coconut oil. *Pharm Biol.* 48(2):151-7 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20645831>
4. Becker, K (2013) Coconut Oil. This Kitchen Staple May Be Perfect For Your Pet's Skin. [Online] Available at: <http://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2013/12/16/coconut-oil-treatment.aspx>