

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Q: What's all the hype about coconut oil?

Coconut oil, primarily used in cooking, is alleged to be good for just about everything. In use for thousands of years, coconut oil is touted for its potent anti-fungal and antibacterial properties, and in one study it inhibited cancer cells in the laboratory. Most of its many beneficial traits are, however, anecdotal and lack scientific scrutiny.

In Africa, coconut oil is used as a throat gargle and for healing skin problems. In Central America and Asia, coconut oil has a long histo-



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ry as a preventative for gum disease and tooth decay. This particular use has been rediscovered on the Internet in the latest buzz known as "oil pulling." It is further argued that coconut oil can be utilized to whiten teeth and combat sinus infections. In Ayurveda Indian medicine, coconut oil is prescribed for urinary burning, bronchitis and prevention of gray hair.

Women with genital dryness, itching and infections often benefit from coconut oil with-

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out using drugs. Coconut oil promotes a healthy scalp and deep hair conditioning. As a nightly face cream, it penetrates well to reduce fine lines.

Be careful not to use too much coconut oil in cooking. As a saturated oil, coconut facilitates the absorption of micronutrients but, at the same time, it may raise LDL or “bad” cholesterol. My advice is use coconut oil liberally externally and sparingly internally.

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