

# Health Concerns About Coconut and Palm Oil

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In recent years, coconut oil and palm oil have been increasingly used as food ingredients, raising questions about their safety.

Coconut oil and palm oil (as well as coconut butter and palm kernel oil) are high in saturated fat, often called “bad fat” because it increases cholesterol levels and is linked to heart disease, dementia, and some forms of cancer.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Saturated fats are easy to spot because they are solid at room temperature, unlike unsaturated fats, which are liquid. While dairy products and meat are the major sources of saturated fat, coconut oil and palm oil contain a great deal of it, as well, which is why they are waxy solids, unlike most other vegetable oils.

Do coconut oil and palm oil really raise cholesterol? The answer is yes. In a meta-analysis published in the journal *Circulation*, researchers reported that consumption of coconut oil significantly raises total cholesterol and LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, compared with consumption of liquid vegetable oils. The study also found no benefit of coconut oil consumption on inflammation, blood sugar control, or weight.<sup>1</sup> Results with palm oil are similar.

These products are used in manufacturing because of their thick mouth feel, but, from a health standpoint, they are almost as bad as animal fats and should be avoided.

## Percent Saturated Fat<sup>4</sup>

Coconut Oil	82% to 93%
Coconut Butter	89% to 95%
Palm Oil	49%
Palm Kernel Oil	82%

## References

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