

JUST ADD COCONUT OIL

Everyone's favorite oil has amazing health, skin, and cooking benefits. But did you know it's a handy ingredient to have on hand for your dog or cat, too? Here's why.

by Nicole Sipe

Those in the know use coconut oil, aware of how it can heal skin ailments, improve digestive health, and boost the immune system. And it's not just for humans. Pet owners have found that a little coconut oil does wonders for dogs and cats. (Of course, as with any supplement, check with your veterinarian before giving it to your pet.) Here's how it can help and how to use it.

Just eat it

Add coconut oil to your pet's food to help improve digestion, reduce or eliminate body odor and bad breath, and lessen symptoms of inflammatory bowel disease.

"Coconut oil has a myriad of awesome qualities," said Krista Kehoe, an integrative nutrition health coach who shares her home outside of Chicago with her family, which includes Australian Shepherds Lily

and Karma. "Growing up, I always thought fat was 'bad.' We're finding out so much about nutrition and the necessity of healthy fats in our diets and the diets of our beloved pups."

Particularly beneficial are medium-chain fatty acids, like those found in coconut oil. "They do things like support a healthy immune response," Krista said. "They can also support healthy digestion and

a beautiful coat. Increased energy, better digestion, and a reduction in overall inflammation — including a reduction in allergies — are some of the other cool things that coconut oil has been linked with."

Krista partially attributes using coconut oil in her dogs' diets to their outstanding health.

"Neither of my dogs have ever had any serious health issues," Krista said. "I suppose you could say that this isn't a controlled study, since I give them both plenty of healthy options and care, but I have to say, they both have amazing coats, and their energy levels are high. Their digestion is regular, and they stay healthy. Another thing — they don't have doggy odor!"

If your pet has never eaten coconut oil before, give him a small portion (¼