

teaspoon per day) for three to four weeks. Then build up to a typical portion. For dogs, that's up to 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds; for cats, up to ½ teaspoon per 5 pounds. Feed as a treat, or mix it into food daily.

"My No. 1 tip — from experience — is start slowly!" Krista said. "If you add fats, even healthy fats, too quickly to your dogs' diets, they could experience digestive upset. I worked up to 1 tablespoon once a day, and my dogs love it. In fact, I don't mix it into their food; they lick it right off the spoon!"

If your pet is overweight, coconut oil is not a great option, as it can cause weight gain if fed too often. Another side effect can be soft stool. If you notice any side effects, stop or reduce the amount you give him.

"The last thing you want to do is upset your puppy's tummy and have to clean up!" Krista said. "Take a couple of weeks to work up from zero to the dose you think is best. If stomach upset happens, cut way back, and hang out there."

Rub it in

You can also apply coconut oil to your pet's skin. It might minimize red, itchy, and dry skin; help with eczema; reduce skin allergies; prevent yeast and fungal infections; clear up contact dermatitis; and aid in healing wounds.

Coconut oil is a fantastic natural moisturizer, making the skin smooth and the coat soft and shiny. Apply a small dab onto your pet's skin as needed. If your pet has dry paw pads or nails, apply it to the paws. You can also use coconut oil as a mask during bath time. First, wash your pet, and rinse well. Next, coat your pet's entire body in a generous amount of coconut oil. Let it stand for five minutes, then shampoo again and rinse well. Your pet's fur will be soft and luxurious!

Nicole Sipe writes from her home in Indiana, where she and her husband raise their two young sons.



What is coconut oil?

Coconut oil comes from the fruit of the coconut palm tree. The oil is high in medium-chain fatty acids, which have been linked to many health benefits. Choose unrefined coconut oil, also known as virgin coconut oil. If you can find a coconut oil that is cold-pressed, then even better.

