

# Words on Wellness

Your extension connection to nutrition and fitness

## The Hype about Coconut Oil

Many claims tout the health benefits of coconut oil, including weight loss, cancer prevention, and Alzheimer's disease. So far the scientific evidence does not support these claims.

The three types of coconut oil—virgin, refined, and partially hydrogenated—are all high in saturated fat. Saturated fat is solid at

room temperature, tends to raise the level of cholesterol in the blood, and comes mainly from animal food products. Some examples of saturated fats are butter, lard, meat fat, solid shortening, palm oil, and coconut oil.

The two main types of coconut oil used in cooking and baking are “virgin” coconut oil and “refined” coconut oil. Virgin is considered to be unrefined. Refined coconut oil is made from dried coconut pulp that is often chemically bleached and deodorized. Since coconuts are a plant and virgin coconut oil has some antioxidant properties, some individuals may view it as healthy. However, virgin coconut oil is high in lauric acid, a type of fatty acid that can raise both good and bad cholesterol levels. Manufacturers may also use another form of coconut oil that has further processing—“partially hydrogenated” coconut oil, which would contain trans fat. Some research suggests coconut oil intake may be associated with a neutral, if not beneficial, effect on cholesterol levels.

Tips for using coconut oil:

- Use “virgin” or unrefined coconut oil.
- Use it in moderation.
- Limit foods made with partially hydrogenated coconut oil like baked goods, biscuits, salty snacks, and some cereals.

**Allergy Alert:** Coconut is considered a tree nut. Individuals with tree nut allergies should talk with their health care provider before using or eating foods containing coconut oil.

Source: Jody Gatewood, MS, RD, LD, Assistant State Nutrition Program Specialist, Human Sciences Extension and Outreach, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach



## Anyday Picnic Salad

Serving Size: 3/4 cup  
Serves: 4

### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups cooked chicken, diced
- 1 apple (cored and diced)
- 1/3 cup celery, chopped (about 1 rib)
- 1/3 cup light ranch dressing or creamy salad dressing
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup pecans or walnuts, chopped (optional)

### Instructions:

1. Combine chicken, apple, and celery in a medium bowl. Add dressing and pepper and stir to coat. Stir in pecans or walnuts, if desired.
2. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate up to 24 hours. Serve on a lettuce leaf; spread on bread, tortillas, or a sandwich; or spoon into a halved tomato or cucumber.

### Nutrition information per serving:

230 calories, 10g total fat, 2g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 80mg cholesterol, 450mg sodium, 11g total carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 6g sugar, 25g protein

This recipe is courtesy of ISU Extension and Outreach's Spend Smart. Eat Smart website. For more recipes, information, and videos, visit [www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings/).

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## Eggs and Poultry: Safe to Eat

Avian influenza has been in the news recently as it spreads throughout poultry flocks in Iowa. Avian influenza does not impact the foods eaten by consumers and cannot be contracted from properly cooked and prepared meats by consumers. The disease is caused by an influenza virus that can infect poultry such as chickens, turkeys, domestic ducks, and geese, and it is carried by migratory birds such as ducks, geese, and shorebirds. It's possible that humans could be infected with the virus only if they were in very close contact with sick birds.

Following safe food handling and cooking practices for poultry foods will keep you safe.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw eggs and poultry.
- Clean cutting boards and other utensils with soap and hot water to keep poultry or eggs from contaminating other foods.
- Sanitize cutting boards using a solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach to one gallon of water.
- Cook poultry to an internal temperature of at least 165°F. Consumers can cook poultry to a higher temperature for personal preferences.
- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm. Casseroles and other dishes should be cooked to 165°F.
- Use pasteurized eggs or egg products for recipes that are served using raw or undercooked eggs, such as Caesar salad dressing and homemade ice cream. Commercial mayonnaise, dressing, and sauces containing pasteurized eggs are safe to eat.

The Egg Industry Center at Iowa State University has additional information for consumers at [www.ans.iastate.edu/EIC/Templates/AvianInfluenzaConsumers.dwt](http://www.ans.iastate.edu/EIC/Templates/AvianInfluenzaConsumers.dwt).

Source: Angela Laury Shaw, Food Science and Human Nutrition, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

## Fitness for People with Disabilities

Everyone age 2 years and older should be physically active. However, sometimes our activity is restricted by physical limitations. The key is to focus on what you can do.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that if a disability is limiting your ability to achieve 150 minutes of weekly activity, take part in any regular physical activity as you are able. It's important to avoid inactivity.

There are many ways to be physically active, so finding an activity you enjoy even with a disability is possible.

- Water sports offer a weightless, low-impact option for those with knee, back, or foot problems. Examples include swimming laps, water aerobics, water jogging, or water walking.
- Use alternative machines that mimic sports but remove the physical barrier. For example, if you love riding a bike but can't due to paralysis or a leg injury, try a hand cycle. For runners with leg, hip, feet, or back issues, try a weightless treadmill. Local physical therapy offices or hospitals may have these machines available for use.
- Chair exercises are another great option if you have difficulty standing. The National Institute on Aging has a free chair exercise DVD you can order ([go4life.nia.nih.gov/exercise-dvd](http://go4life.nia.nih.gov/exercise-dvd)) or try this free online 5-5-5 Chair Workout video ([www.acefitness.org/acefit/healthy-living-article/60/2887/5-5-5-chair-workout/](http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/healthy-living-article/60/2887/5-5-5-chair-workout/)).



Always consult your health care provider before beginning any physical activity routines.

Source: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pa.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pa.html)

## Do you like the healthy ideas offered in the Words on Wellness (WOW)

newsletter? Are there topics you'd like to see in the newsletter? Let us know! We value your opinion and want to hear what you think. Share your suggestions by taking our voluntary survey found at [https://iastate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5JURxU5IY8KKE0R](https://iastate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5JURxU5IY8KKE0R).

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