

Oil pulling with coconut oil works by attracting and dissolving bacteria and plaque through the oil's natural fat content and its antibacterial compound, lauric acid. The process is based on an ancient Ayurvedic tradition and is intended to supplement, not replace, regular oral hygiene like brushing and flossing. [\[1, 2, 3, 4\]](#)

How oil pulling attracts and removes bacteria

- **Adhesion:** The cell membranes of oral bacteria have a lipid (fatty) outer layer. When you swish coconut oil in your mouth, the bacteria's fatty membranes are attracted to and stick to the oil.
- **Mechanical action:** The act of swishing and pulling the oil between your teeth physically dislodges and removes the bacteria and food particles that brushing might miss.
- **Emulsification:** As you swish, the oil mixes with your saliva and becomes thinner and milky-white. This emulsification increases the oil's surface area, allowing it to coat the teeth and gums and trap more bacteria.
- **Antimicrobial properties:** Coconut oil is a popular choice for oil pulling due to its high concentration of lauric acid, a fatty acid with proven antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.
 - **Targets bad bacteria:** Studies show that lauric acid is effective against harmful bacteria like *Streptococcus mutans*, a primary cause of tooth decay and plaque buildup.
 - **Less disruption to the microbiome:** Unlike harsh, alcohol-based mouthwashes that kill both good and bad bacteria, oil pulling removes harmful bacteria while preserving the balance of your oral microbiome. [\[1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8\]](#)

Documented oral health benefits

While not a cure-all, studies have shown that oil pulling with coconut oil can lead to several oral health improvements when done consistently:

- **Reduces harmful bacteria:** Research indicates that oil pulling can significantly decrease the number of bacteria that contribute to plaque and tooth decay.
- **Decreases plaque and gingivitis:** Oil pulling can effectively reduce plaque and inflammation of the gums, also known as gingivitis.
- **Freshens breath:** By targeting the bacteria that produce foul-smelling gases, oil pulling can help treat bad breath, or halitosis. [\[1, 2\]](#)

Limitations and risks

- **Not a replacement for professional dental care:** The American Dental Association (ADA) and other dental professionals emphasize that oil pulling cannot replace regular brushing, flossing, or visits to the dentist.
- **Limited scientific evidence for other claims:** There is little to no scientific evidence to support claims that oil pulling whitens teeth or detoxifies the body beyond the mouth.
- **Swallowing the oil:** The oil should be spat out into the trash after use, as it contains the bacteria you've "pulled". Swallowing it can cause stomach upset and, in very rare cases, aspiration pneumonia.
- **Strain on the jaw:** Swishing the oil for 15–20 minutes can lead to jaw discomfort or soreness, especially for those with temporomandibular joint (TMJ) issues. [\[1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15\]](#)

AI responses may include mistakes.

- [1] <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/oil-pulling-coconut-oil>
- [2] <https://www.rejuv-health.com/biological-dentistry/oil-pulling/>
- [3] <https://sinadadental.com/blog/what-oil-pulling-can-do-for-your-oral-health/>
- [4] <https://dallasdentalconcierge.com/pros-and-cons-of-oil-pulling/>
- [5] <https://www.drkfisher.com/blog/coconut-oil-pulling-for-better-oral-hygiene>
- [6] <https://www.webmd.com/oral-health/features/oil-pulling>
- [7] <https://drgingers.com/4-big-benefits-of-oil-pulling/>
- [8] <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5198813/>
- [9] <https://bluehaven.dental/what-is-oil-pulling-and-will-it-help-your-teeth/>
- [10] <https://www.hollandandbarrett.com/the-health-hub/food-drink/food/coconut/things-you-can-use-coconut-oil-for/>
- [11] https://www.youtube.com/shorts/-_E_UTXXIW4
- [12] <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323757>
- [13] <https://mypenndentist.org/dental-tips/2024/09/04/oil-pulling-benefits-and-dangers/>
- [14] <https://mypenndentist.org/dental-tips/2024/09/04/oil-pulling-benefits-and-dangers/>
- [15] <https://baysidekidsdentist.com/blog/what-is-the-truth-about-oil-pulling/>