Why is coconut oil the only type of oil you should use on your skin?

The answer is free-radicals

Most commercial creams and lotions are predominantly water. Their moisture is quickly absorbed into dry, wrinkled skin. As the water enters the skin, it expands the tissues, like filling a balloon with water, so that wrinkles fade away and the skin feels smoother. But this is only temporary. As soon as the water evaporates or is carried away by the blood stream, the dry, wrinkled skin returns. No matter how hard you try people will never be able to permanently cure dry, wrinkled skin with any commercial body lotion or body care products. Besides the water, most lotions have an oil of some type. This oil is almost always a highly refined vegetable oil devoid of all natural protective antioxidants. One product in our food supply and in body care products that leads to a great deal of free radicals is oxidized vegetable oils.

Our skin is made up of connective tissues. These tissues give our skin strength and elasticity. When we are young and healthy the skin is smooth, elastic and supple. This is the effect of strong connective fibers. As we age their fibers are continually subjected to free-radical attack which breaks them down. As a result, connective tissues become hardened and lose both elasticity and strength. The skin loses its ability to hold itself together and begins to sag and become wrinkled. Once young, soft and smooth the skin turns dry and leathery.

Once a free-radical reaction is started it can cause a chain reaction which produces more free radicals, which ultimately damages thousands of molecules. The only way our body has to fight them is with antioxidants. When a free radical comes into contact with an antioxidant, the chain reaction is stopped. For this reason, it is good to have plenty of antioxidants in our cells and tissues to protect us. The number of antioxidants we have in our tissues is determined to a large extent by the nutrients in our diet. Having anti-oxidants in skin care products is important, too. Dr. Ray Peat, a biochemist who has written about the antioxidant properties of coconut oil, states "It is well established that dietary coconut oil reduces our need for vitamin E, but I think its antioxidant role is more general than that, and that it has both direct and indirect antioxidant activities." Virgin Coconut Oil is especially useful in fighting free-radicals, as it is unrefined and hasn't been stripped of any of its natural components through the refining process.

Conventional body care products that are made with refined vegetable oils which have all the antioxidants stripped from them are highly prone to free-radical generation both in and outside the body. That is why eating processed vegetable oils can cause a deficiency in vitamin E and other antioxidants. The antioxidants are used up fighting off free radicals causing permanent damage to connective tissues. This is also the reason why you should be careful about the type of oils you use on your skin, and in your lotions, creams and lip balms. If you use a lotion, or cream with a refined oil in it you are in fact causing your skin to age faster. The lotion, though it may bring temporary improvement will actually accelerate the aging of the skin and even promote skin cancer through the free radicals that are readily formed from the refined vegetable oil..

One of the classic signs of old age is the appearance of brown, freckle-like spots or liver spots. It is a sign of free-radical deterioration of the lipids (fats) in our skin, thus the name *lipo*fuscin. Oxidation of polyunsaturated fats and protein by free radical activity in the skin is recognized as the major cause of liver spots. Liver spots don't ordinarily hurt or show any signs of discomfort. If we couldn't see them we wouldn't even know they were there. But they do affect our health and our appearance. Because cells cannot dispose of the lipofuscin pigment, it gradually accumulates within many cells of the body as we age. Once lipofuscin pigment develops, it

tends to stick around for life, but you can prevent further osication and perhaps even reduce the spots you already have by using the right kind of oils in your diet and on your skin.

The ideal lotion is one that is made from an oil that not only softens the skin, but protects it against damage, promotes healing and gives it a more youthful, healthy appearance. Coconut oil fits that description. **Pure virgin coconut oil is the best natural ingredient for skin lotion available**. It prevents destructive free-radical formation and provides protection against them. It can help to keep the skin from developing liver spots, and other blemishes caused by aging and over exposure to sunlight. It helps to keep connective tissues strong and supple so that the skin doesn't sag and wrinkle. In some cases it might even restore damaged or diseased skin. The oil is absorbed into the skin and into the cell structure of the connective tissues, limiting the damage excessive sun exposure can cause.

Coconut oil will not only bring temporary relief to the skin, but it will aid in healing and repairing. It will have lasting benefits, unlike most lotions. It can help bring back a youthful appearance. The coconut oil will aid in removing the outer layer of dead skin cells, making the skin smoother. The skin will become more evenly textured with a healthy "shine". While doing this the coconut oil will penetrate into the deeper layers of the skin and strengthen the underlying tissues.

Coconut oil on your hair and scalp

What coconut oil can do for your skin it can do for your hair. It is wonderful to use as a hair conditioner. Beauticians who are familiar with coconut swear by it. It softens the hair and conditions the scalp. Using the coconut oil as a pre-wash conditioner can rid a person of dandruff better than a medicated shampoo.

The protective environment of the skin and how coconut oil helps

Antiseptic fatty acids in coconut oil help to prevent fungal and bacterial infections in the skin when it is consumed and to some extent, when it is applied directly to the skin. The only way to gain entry into the body other than through the natural openings, such as the nose and mouth, is by penetrating the skin. When the skin's defenses break down, infections can result. Acne, ringworm, herpes, boils, athlete's foot, and warts are just some of the infectious conditions that can affect the skin and body.

The biggest chemical barrier to infectious organisms is the acid layer on the skin. Healthy skin has a pH of about 5, making it slightly acidic. Our sweat (containing uric and lactic acids) and body oils promote this acidic environment. For this reason, sweat and oil do us good. Harmless bacteria can tolerate the acid and live on the skin, but troublesome bacteria can't thrive and their numbers are few.

The oil our bodies produce is called sebum. Sebum is secreted by oil glands (sebaceous glands) located at the root of every hair as well as other places. This oil is very important to skin health. It softens and lubricates the skin and hair and prevents the skin from drying and cracking. Sebum also contains medium chain fatty acids, in the form of medium chain triglycerides, that can be released to fight harmful germs.

Our skin is home to many tiny organisms, most of which are harmless; some are beneficial. At least one variety of bacterium is essential to the healthy environment on our skin. It feeds on the sebum, breaking down the triglycerides into free fatty acids. The bacteria actually feed on the glycerol part of the triglyceride. This leaves fatty acids which are now "freed" from the glycerol unit that held them together. Medium chain fatty acids which are bound to the glycerol unit as they are in coconut oil have no antimicrobial properties. However, when they are broken apart into free fatty acids, they become powerful antimicrobials.

So these bacteria convert the medium chain triglycerides (in the sebum or on the skin) into free fatty acids that can kill disease-causing bacteria, viruses, and fungi. The combination of the slightly acid pH and medium chain fatty acids provides a protective chemical layer on the skin that prevents infection from disease-causing organisms. Due primarily to the action of bacteria, the oil on the surface of your skin and hair is composed of between 40 and 60 percent free fatty acids. The medium chain fatty acids in the sebum provide the protective layer on the skin that kills harmful germs. Coconut oil is nature's richest source of medium chain fatty acids.

When coconut oil is put on the skin it doesn't have any immediate antimicrobial action. However, when bacteria which are always present on the skin turn these triglycerides into free fatty acids, just as it does with sebum, the result is an increase in the number of antimicrobial fatty acids on the skin and protection from infection. The free fatty acids also help to contribute to the acid environment on the skin which repels disease causing germs.

When bathing or showering, soap washes the protective layer of oil and acid off our skin. Often afterwards the skin becomes tight and dry. Adding moisturizers helps the skin feel better, but it does not replace the acid or the protective medium chain fatty acid layers that was removed. Your skin is vulnerable to infection at this time. You would think that your body would be clean and germ-free after a bath. But germs are everywhere, floating in the air, on our clothes and everything we touch. Many germs survive washing by hiding in cracks and folds of the skin. Before long your skin is again teaming with microorganisms, both good and bad. Until sweat and oils return to reestablish the body's chemical barrier your skin is vulnerable to infection. If you have a cut or cracked skin, this can allow streptococcus, staphylococcus and other harmful germs entry into the body. By using a coconut oil cream, lotion or just pure coconut oil you can quickly help reestablish the skin's natural antimicrobial and acid barrier. Many people use coconut oil on their skin after every bath.

Coconut oil will absorb easily, keep the skin soft, and yet without feeling greasy. It is not like other oils used to soften rough, dry skin. It will help to reduce chronic skin inflammation within days and be soothing and healing to wounds, blood blisters, rashes, etc. It is an excellent ingredient to use in healing salves and ointments. People have used a coconut oil/crushed garlic mixture at night to eliminate plantar warts and athlete's foot with excellent results.
In the making of soaps, the soap does not have a tallow smell nor the smell of a vegetable oil. Instead, it has a nice fresh smell and yields a nice fluffy lather. Coconut oil is one of the most popular oils used in soap making.

Adapted from Bruce Fife's book The Healing Miracles of Coconut Oil.