

Would YOU clean your teeth with coconut oil? Study finds the ancient Indian technique really DOES have benefit mouth health

- Oil pulling is ancient Indian technique of swishing coconut oil in mouth
- Is claimed it whitens teeth, boosts immune system and helps skin to glow
- New research has found the technique could help prevent the formation of plaque and development of gum disease

By VANESSA CHALMERS

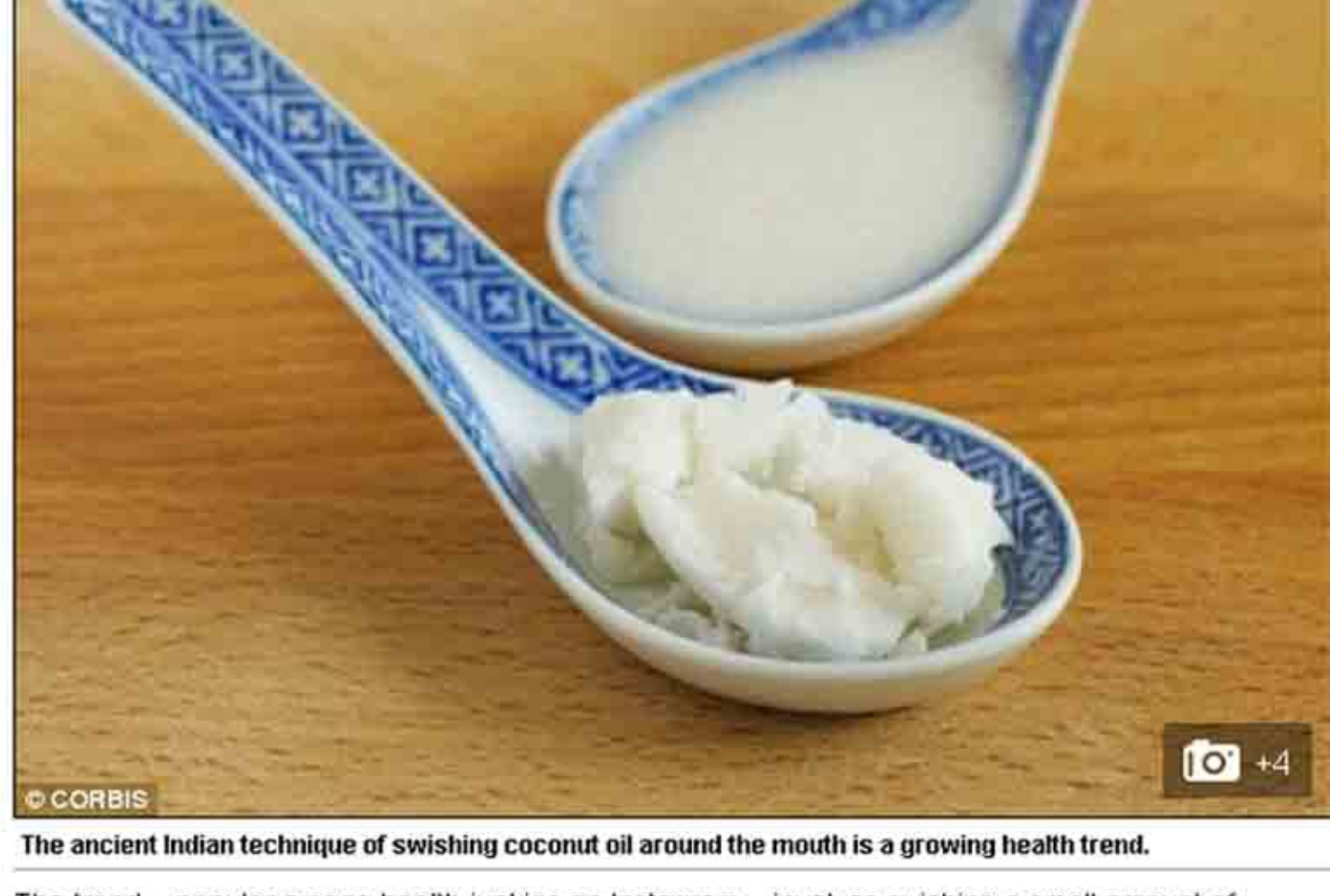
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Oil pulling – that’s the ancient Indian technique of swishing coconut oil around your mouth as part of your oral hygiene – is a huge trend.

Enthusiasts for the practice claim that not only does it whiten teeth but that it also could add glow to skin, keep colds at bay and help exhaustion.

Now, new research has confirmed its benefits, writes Vanessa Chalmers for **Healthista.com**.

Celebrities ranging from bobsleighter Amy Williams to rap artist Tinie Tempah, and Made in Chelsea stars Lucy Watson and Jamie Laing are raving about oil-pulling.



The ancient Indian technique of swishing coconut oil around the mouth is a growing health trend.

The trend – popular among health junkies on Instagram – involves swishing a small amount of coconut (or sometimes sesame) oil in your mouth as part of your morning teeth cleaning regime. But does it really make any difference?

Until recently, there has been little scientific evidence to show the benefits of oil pulling.

Now, a new study published in April found the ancient Indian practice using coconut oil in the mouth could be an effective procedure in decreasing plaque formation and plaque-induced gum disease.

The research, published in the Nigerian Journal of Medicine’s March/April 2015 edition, looked at 60 people between the ages of 16 and 18 who added oil pulling to their oral hygiene routine over a 30 day period.

Their plaque and gum disease levels were assessed on days 1, 7, 15, and 30.

After just seven days of oil pulling, levels of plaque and gum disease significantly reduced, and continued to decrease over a period of a month.

The researchers, from Kennur Dental College in India, said: ‘Coconut oil is an easily available edible oil.

‘It is unique because it contains predominantly medium chain fatty acids, of which 45-50 percent is lauric acid.

‘Lauric acid has proven anti inflammatory and antimicrobial effects.’

SO, WHAT EXACTLY IS OIL PULLING?



Celebrities ranging from bobsleighter Amy Williams to rap artist Tinie Tempah (pictured), and Made in Chelsea stars Lucy Watson and Jamie Laing are raving about oil-pulling

Oil pulling is increasingly being added to people’s morning brush and floss routine, but has been a traditional remedy for 3,000 years in Ayurvedic medicine – the ancient Indian healing system.

It involves taking a teaspoon of oil and swishing it round for five to 20 minutes before spitting it out and some of the further benefits attributed to it in Ayurvedic medicine include glowing skin, fresher breath and a better ability to fight colds, exhaustion, and dark circles under the eyes (although there are no studies on those though).

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS THINK?

Deepa Apte, ayurvedic doctor and director of Ayurveda Pura Spa in London, says ‘Gandusha is the Indian/Sanskrit name for oil pulling and literally means pull out toxins from the stomach and spit them out.’

US dentist Dr Jessica T Emery, founder of Sugar Fix Dental Loft in Chicago - and an oil-pulling devotee - wrote on her blog: ‘Most microorganisms in the mouth consist of a single cell.

‘Cells are covered with a fatty membrane which is the cell’s skin. When these cells come into contact with oil – a fat – they naturally adhere to each other.’

Leading UK dentist Dr James Goolnik, founder of Bow Lane Dental in Central London and previously voted the most influential person in UK dentistry, says ‘oil pulling is likely to lessen the bacterial load in the mouth’.

However he added the long term oral health benefits have not been shown. ‘I wouldn’t recommend it as a replacement for your oral care and hygiene.’

REVEALED: HOW TO OIL PULL

Oil pulling must be done on an empty stomach, at least four hours after eating, and an hour after drinking water or clear liquids. Wait two hours after drinking juice or any other heavier liquid.

Dr Apte has the following instructions:

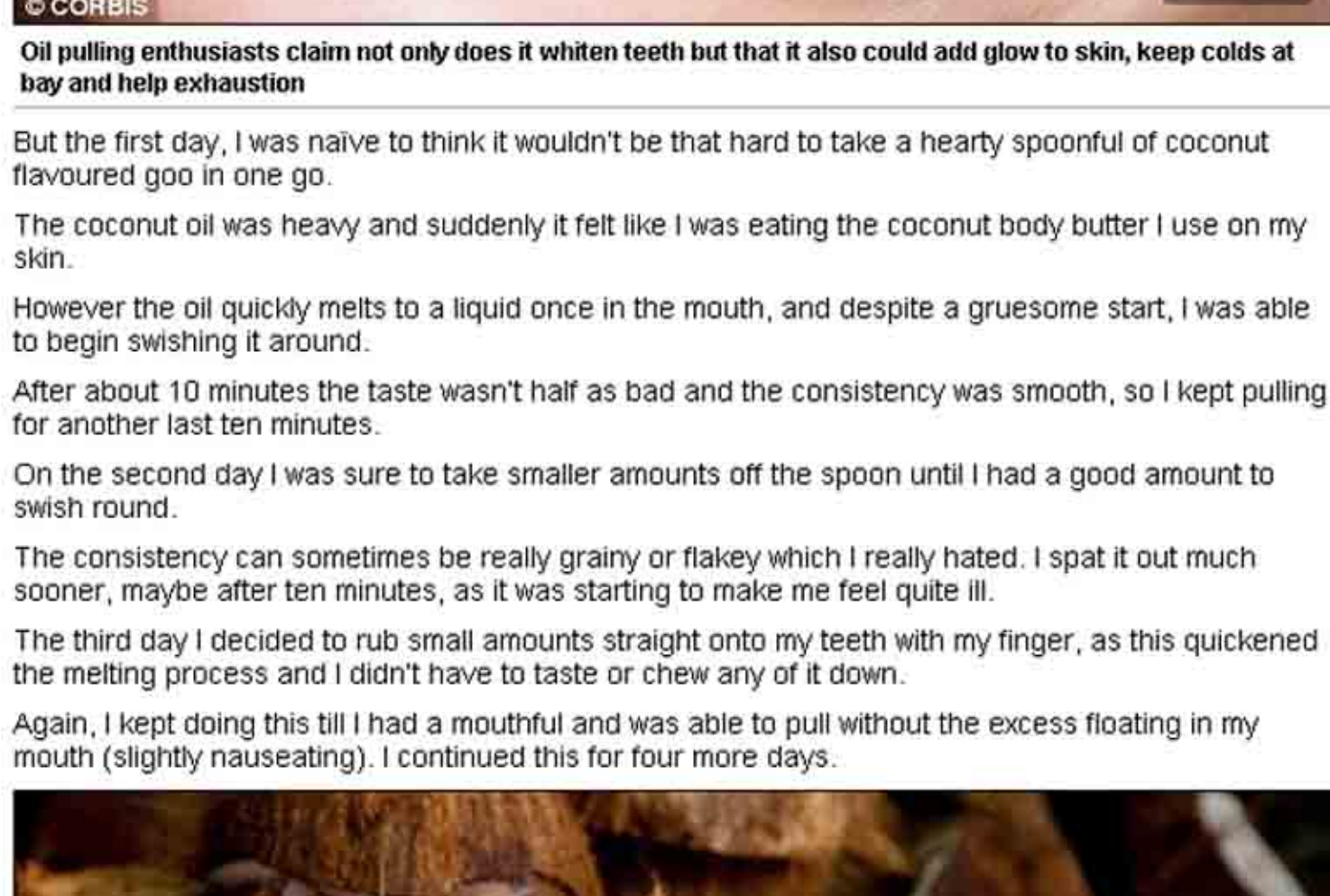
- * Brush and floss your teeth
- * Take a teaspoon of your chosen oil (coconut or sesame work well)
- * Hold the oil in the mouth for 5-20 minutes, swishing it around and moving it in the mouth as much as possible
- * Spit out the oil (down the toilet or in the bin)
- * Rinse the mouth with hot water
- * It’s best done in the morning.

PUTTING IT TO THE TEST

Seeing so many posts on my social media feeds from celebrities, and hearing even some of my guy friends had read up about it, I decided to put the oil pulling craze to the test for just seven days.

I’m always interested to try new low maintenance techniques to make my hair that inch longer, or my teeth just a little shinier (oh, and of course, the oral health benefits would be a plus...).

I’m not a huge fan of the taste of coconut (except in a Pina Colada), so I was already unsure of how I would get on.



Oil pulling enthusiasts claim not only does it whiten teeth but that it also could add glow to skin, keep colds at bay and help exhaustion

But the first day, I was naïve to think it wouldn’t be that hard to take a hearty spoonful of coconut flavoured goo in one go.

The coconut oil was heavy and suddenly it felt like I was eating the coconut body butter I use on my skin.

However the oil quickly melts to a liquid once in the mouth, and despite a gruesome start, I was able to begin swishing it around.

After about 10 minutes the taste wasn’t half as bad and the consistency was smooth, so I kept pulling for another last ten minutes.

On the second day I was sure to take smaller amounts off the spoon until I had a good amount to swish round.

The consistency can sometimes be really grainy or flakey which I really hated. I spat it out much sooner, maybe after ten minutes, as it was starting to make me feel quite ill.

The third day I decided to rub small amounts straight onto my teeth with my finger, as this quickened the melting process and I didn’t have to taste or chew any of it down.

Again, I kept doing this till I had a mouthful and was able to pull without the excess floating in my mouth (slightly nauseating). I continued this for four more days.



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I haven’t noticed a difference in the colour of my teeth, but I’m going to continue to use it as I’m really intrigued to see if this can work for me as it has others.

I did see an improvement in my general mouth health, however. I often get ulcers under my tongue, most probably because I can’t seem to cut sugary drinks from my diet, but also because I swish them around my mouth for about 15 seconds before swallowing them.

It’s something I have done since I was a small child, without consciously knowing it, and despite my mother’s best efforts I just can’t budge the strange habit.

My dentist has also warned me of the damage it will do to my teeth and gums.

But the coconut oil seems to have taken away the sting of my ulcers, so I’m really pleased about that.

For me, I think it will be worthwhile I continue to pull for just 5-10 minutes while getting ready in the morning – because it’s not like I have the energy to have a conversation with anyone in the morning...

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