

The Wonderful Coconut

By Dr. Jill Tieman

Many people have a misconception about the coconut and coconut oil. Although coconut products have been used for thousands of years by natives of the Tropics, India, and Asia. Westerners feel it is unhealthy. These native populations enjoy good health even though they are using a seemingly unhealthy fat. Coconut oil is truly the healthiest oil you can consume. It is rich in lauric acid, which is known for being antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal, and contains no trans fat. Lauric and palmitic fatty acids are found in mother's breast milk.

Unfortunately, there is a widespread misconception that coconut oil is bad for you because it contains saturated fat. To really understand the benefits of coconut oil, I suggest you read Dr. Mary Enig and Sally Fallon's article "The Truth About Saturated Fat" to first dispel any lingering notions you may have that all saturated fats are dangerous.

Fats are categorized as either short-, medium-, or long-chain depending on how many carbon molecules they contain. Close to two-thirds of the saturated fat in coconut oil is made up of medium-chain fatty acids, which have antimicrobial properties, are easily digested by the body for quick energy, and are beneficial to the immune system. Far from being dangerous, the saturated fat in coconut oil is actually health promoting.

So how could an oil that is so good for you have gotten such a bad reputation? The answer comes down to simple economics and politics. Based on some flawed studies performed over four decades ago, some of which used primarily hydrogenated coconut oils, a powerful anti-saturated fat

movement began. Remember--hydrogenated oils are oils with trans-fatty acids, which have been altered from their original chemical composition and have been shown to raise cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease and other health problems. You should not consume hydrogenated oils, whether it is coconut or another vegetable oil. Trans fats, hydrogenated oils are actually being banned from certain municipalities because people are starting to understand what Dr. Mary Enig has been saying for the past four decades. Around the 1960's the edible oil industry began to denounce all saturated fats and heavily promote polyunsaturated fats such as canola, soybean, safflower, corn, and other seed and nut oils. However, these oils easily become rancid when exposed to oxygen and produce large amounts of damaging free radicals in the body. What is not commonly known is that these oils can actually cause aging, clotting, inflammation, cancer and weight gain. You can read the article "Secrets of the Edible Oil Industry" for more information.

Fortunately, coconut oil has begun to gain some positive media exposure as researchers realize its health-promoting qualities. However, coconut oil can vary widely in terms of the types of coconuts used, the manufacturing processes used to make the oil, and more, and all of these factors play a major role in the effectiveness of the oil.

Most commercial coconut oils are RBD (refined, bleached, and deodorized). RBD oils do contain the medium chain fatty acids, however they also contain chemicals used in processing. You must buy a coconut oil that has not been bleached, deodorized, refined or hydrogenated. There are several brands on the market that can be purchased over the internet or at the health food store that fall under this category. Similarly, if you purchase coconut, you must buy the unsweetened and unrefined type. This can be purchased as flakes or grated.

Resources

Lauric.org

Coconut oil.com

Tropical Tradition.com (good resource for purchasing coconut oil)

Mercola.com (search for coconut oil)