

Coconut Oil - Here's what you need to know about this amazing rejuvenation and healing oil.

Coconut oil is a popular nutritional oil derived from the meat of matured coconuts. Coconut has long been a primary source of food throughout the tropics. Its various industrial and cosmetic applications have made it a very viable commodity. Coconut oil is heat stable, making it suitable for cooking at high temperatures. It is slow to oxidize, resists rancidity and has a shelf life of approximately two years or more; virgin coco creme created through a wet-milling process has an indefinite shelf life.

The composition of coconut oil

The coconut possesses a wide variety of health benefits due to its fiber and nutritional content, but it is the oil that makes it a remarkable source of food and medicine. It has definitely earned its reputation as the healthiest oil in the world despite the fact that its high saturated fat content was once falsely claimed to be unhealthy.

What makes coconut oil different?

Oils and fats are composed of molecules known as fatty acids. They are classified either according to saturation or based on molecular length and size of the carbon chain within each fatty acid. Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats are an example of the first class.

The second classification is based on molecular size or length of the fatty acid's carbon chain. Long chains of carbon atoms consist of each fatty acid with an attached hydrogen atom. There are short chain fatty acids known as SCFA, medium chain fatty acids (MCFA) such as coconut oil and long chain fatty acids (LCFA). Whether unsaturated or saturated, the majority of fats and oils in our diet are composed of long chain fatty acids. In fact, a majority of the fatty acids commonly consumed are LCFA.

Coconut oil is predominantly medium-chain fatty acid (MCFA) and the effects of the MCFA in coconut oil are distinctly different from the LCFA found in other foods. In fact, the saturated and unsaturated fat in milk, eggs, meat and even in plants and most vegetable oils are made of LCFA. Why is this relevant? It is important because our bodies respond and metabolize each fatty acid differently. It is the MCFA found in coconut oil that makes it special because these fatty acids do not have a negative effect on cholesterol. In fact, they are known to lower the risk of heart disease and atherosclerosis. There are only few dietary sources of MCFA, and one of the best sources by far is coconut oil.

The liver and gall bladder do not need to digest and emulsify MCFA, resulting in

instant energy, increased metabolic rate and subsequently more heat production as well as increased circulation. Anyone with an impaired fat digestion or removed gallbladder will benefit from coconut oil as this oil is easily digested.

Lauric Acid

Coconut oil has many health benefits which are attributed to the presence of lauric acid. When it is present in the body, lauric acid is converted into monolaurin, a compound that is highly toxic to viruses, bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms because of its ability to disrupt their lipid membranes and virtually destroy them.

Monolaurin is effective for treating candida albicans, fungal infections and athlete's foot. It also targets bacterial infections and viruses like measles, influenza, hepatitis C and even HIV. In fact, researchers from the Philippines are studying the effectiveness of lauric acid against HIV/AIDS due to its strong anti-viral properties. Moreover, lauric acid is non-toxic, making it a better alternative to modern drugs that are typically prescribed for viruses as well as fungal and bacterial infections.

Without lauric acid, monolaurin cannot be produced by the body. Breast milk is the only other source of lauric acid, which must explain the lesser incidents of infections with breast-fed infants. It has also been observed that regular consumption of coconut oil boosts immunity and reduces incidences of sickness.

Health Benefits of Coconut Oil

Fight Alzheimer's Disease With Coconut Oil

Five million people have Alzheimer's disease and that number is expected to increase exponentially as baby boomers enter their golden years. If you have a loved one with this dreaded disease you should know that, in some people, coconut oil slows the progression of Alzheimer's and may also prevent it. One of those people is Steve Newport. His Alzheimer's has slowed considerably. Some of his symptoms even reversed, thanks to the unlikely treatment prescribed by his wife, Dr. Mary Newport, a physician who runs a neonatology ward at a Tampa, Florida, hospital.

Dr. Mary Newport became determined to help her husband after the severity of his disease was revealed upon taking an Alzheimer's test in which the person being tested is asked to draw the face of a clock. "He drew circles and several numbers just in a very random pattern, didn't really look anything like a clock," she said. The doctor pulled me over to the side and said, "You know; he's on the verge of severe Alzheimer's at this point and he is beyond moderate now". That was very devastating news.

Dr. Newport began learning everything she could about her husband's disease. "It appears to be a type of diabetes of the brain and it's a process that starts happening

at least 10 or 20 years before you start having symptoms and it's very similar to type 1 or type 2 diabetes in that you develop a problem with insulin." In this case, insulin problems prevent brain cells from accepting glucose, their primary fuel. Without it, they eventually die. But there is an alternative fuel: ketones, which cells easily accept. Ketones are metabolized in the liver after you eat medium-chain triglycerides, like those found in coconut oil.

So Dr. Newport added coconut oil to the diet of her husband, Steve. Just two weeks later, he took the clock test again and demonstrated stunning improvement. Newport said, "I thought at the time, was it just good luck? Was it a lot of prayer? Was it the coconut oil? And I thought, well, we're going to keep the coconut oil going," she said. Three weeks later Steve took the clock test a third time and continued to perform better on it. And it wasn't just intellectually; he also improved emotionally and physically. "He was not able to run; he was able to run again," she recalled. "He could not read for about a year and a half, but after two or three months, he was able to read. Instead of being very sluggish, not talking very much in the morning, he would come out in the morning with energy, talkative and joking, and he could find his water and his utensils.

Another Ketone Source

And while coconut oil is encouraging in the battle against Alzheimer's disease, there's something even more powerful available—but at a price. A team of biochemists led by Professor Kieran Clarke at England's Oxford University have developed a ketone ester that packs a punch ten times greater than coconut oil. "It reaches quite considerably higher levels," said Clarke, "and you can get whatever levels you want depending on how much you drink." The problem is, they need millions of dollars to mass-produce it. "It's very expensive. And so we can't make very much of it ourselves," said Clarke, "And what we would like is funding so we could actually scale up and make it. But of course there's no real profit in manufacturing stuff like that, and so people really don't want to fund that sort of thing."

So until a high-potency ketone ester is available to the general public, coconut oil is still a good ketone source. Just make sure it's pure, in other words, non-hydrogenated. Avoid any hydrogenated oil, including hydrogenated coconut oil, because hydrogenated oils are the same thing as dangerous trans fats. Look on the list of ingredients for the word "hydrogenated."

Increase Your Good Cholesterol with Coconut Oil

Some people are afraid to eat coconut oil because they think it's bad for your heart. But it's actually very healthy. Dr. Beverly Teter, a lipid biochemist, is a researcher at the University of Maryland who specializes in the area of dietary fat. She says years ago coconut oil was criticized for raising cholesterol. But scientists have since learned

there are two kinds of cholesterol: LDL, the bad kind, and HDL, which is very good for you, and is the kind coconut oil raises. "So they put out the message that it increased serum cholesterol," explained Dr. Teter, "but the truth of the matter is, it was helping the profile of the serum cholesterol. That never has been corrected in the public press, and I think that's the reason people have misconceptions about it."

Beyond Alzheimer's Disease

Not only does coconut oil improve cholesterol levels, but Dr. Teter says the way it helps the brains of some Alzheimer's patients can be extended to people with Parkinson's disease, ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), epilepsy, dementia, and even schizophrenia and autism.

Coconut Oil – A Natural Antibiotic

Coconut oil is a natural antibiotic but without the negative side effects. Dr. Teter says because of that, it can also help defend against viruses like HIV and herpes viruses. "The coconut oil tends to keep the bacteria down so that if you're assaulted with a virus your immune system can concentrate on the virus. It doesn't have to concentrate on 27 other bacteria that day," she explained.

Have Others Experienced Improvements

Since the *St. Petersburg Times* published Dr. Newport's article "What If There Was a Cure for Alzheimer's Disease and No One Knew?" on October 29, 2008, she has received many reports from caregivers about their loved ones, and has also read on various forums and online message boards about people who have had dramatic improvements like Steve. They include such improvements as: better social interaction, better recognition of loved ones, improved conversation, resumption of activities, better appetite, better sleep, having more energy and being more talkative. Many others experience more subtle improvement or very gradual improvement that turns into very significant improvement over several months. Others feel they see no change, but their loved one has at least stabilized and not worsened. Several people have e-mailed Dr. Newport telling her that until they stopped taking the coconut oil, they did not realize how much the oil was helping them. Dr. Newport recommends that caretakers keep a journal, so that they can decide months down the road if there has been improvement. She has also heard from some people with diseases other than Alzheimer's who believe they have seen some improvements, including other forms of dementia (FTD, CBD), Parkinson's, ALS (Lou Gehrig's), Huntington's, MS, bipolar disease, even glaucoma and macular degeneration (which affect neurons).

Incorporating Coconut Oil Into Your Diet

According to Dr. Newport, coconut oil can be substituted for any solid or liquid oil, lard, butter or margarine in baking or cooking on the stove, and can be mixed directly into foods already prepared. Some people take it straight with a spoon, but for most people it may be hard to swallow this way and more pleasant to take with food. When cooking on the stove, coconut oil smokes if heated to greater than 350 degrees F. or medium heat. You can avoid this problem by adding a little olive or peanut oil. Coconut oil can be used at any temperature in the oven when mixed in foods.

Coconut milk is a combination of the oil and the water from the coconut and most of the calories are from the oil. Look for brands with 10 to 13 grams of fat in 2 ounces. Look in the grocery store's Asian section. Some brands are less expensive but are diluted with water. Coconut cream is mostly coconut milk and sometimes has added sugar. Flaked or grated coconut can be purchased unsweetened or sweetened and is a very good source of coconut oil and fiber and has about 15 grams oil and 3 grams fiber in ¼ cup. Frozen or canned coconut meat usually has a lot of added sugar and not much oil per serving. A fresh coconut can be cut up into pieces and eaten raw. A 2" x 2" piece has about 160 calories with 15 grams of oil and 4 grams of fiber. MCT Oil (medium-chain triglycerides) are part of the coconut oil and can also be purchased in some health food stores or online. This may be useful for people who are on the go and do not have much time to cook. Also, MCT oil is used as energy and not stored as fat, so it may be useful for someone who wants to lose weight, if substituted for some of the other fats in the diet. Coconut water does not usually contain coconut oil, but has other health benefits. The electrolyte composition is similar to human plasma and is useful to prevent or treat dehydration.

Hair care

The unique fatty acids in coconut oil have a small molecular structure and pass freely into the hair's cell membrane, allowing for the oil to penetrate the hair's shaft; this literally brings out the deep conditioning from within compared to other conditioners that work from the outside in.

Massaging the oil into the scalp can offer relief from dandruff. Dandruff is caused by dry skin or an internal fungal condition that reached the scalp. With regular use, coconut oil can kill the fungus and eliminate dandruff issues. For deep hair conditioning, a teaspoon or two on damp hair left for as long as

possible can give an ultra-nice shine. Leave it on overnight and see startling results.

Skin care

Coconut oil is an excellent skin conditioner containing medium-chain triglycerides, naturally occurring fats which deeply penetrate, moisturize and acts as a protective barrier against environmental and free radical damage. The oil also provides sun protection by screening 20 percent of ultraviolet exposure.

Coconut oil is rich in anti-oxidants and bursting with the natural microbial and antibacterial agent's caprylic and capric acids. Its ability to smooth the skin while infusing with anti-oxidants makes it a perfect anti-aging moisturizer. Moreover, it contains vitamin E, another antioxidant popular for hastening the recovery of skin abrasions, burns and other trauma.

Weight loss

Medium-chain fatty acids found in coconut oil can speed up metabolism faster than long-chain fatty acids because they are easily digested and converted into energy. In fact, a study reported medium-chain fatty acids to be three times more effective in raising metabolism than long-chain fatty acids, leading researchers to conclude that effective weight loss can be achieved by replacing long-chain fatty acids with medium- chain fatty acids.

Natural remedy for pneumonia

In a study presented before The American College of Chest Physicians on October 29, 2008, coconut oil was found to offer pneumonia patients faster and more complete relief from symptoms. This could be a welcome development for many as this means a reduced stay in the hospital, lower medical expenses and lower exposure for the patient to a hospital environment. Moreover, it is an inexpensive addition to traditional antibiotics and has no known side effects.

Diabetes & Heart Disease

Lowers risk of diabetes, heart disease and improves cholesterol levels - In a study made on women subjects ranging from 20 to 40 years old, half of the subjects were instructed to take a 30 ml soybean oil supplement while the other

half were instructed to take a 30ml coconut oil supplement while maintaining moderate exercise routine over a 12-week period. Results of the study showed that although both group of women had a decrease in body mass index (BMI), only the women who were taking coconut oil showed a notable decrease in waist circumference significantly lowering the risk of conditions like type II diabetes and heart disease.

Furthermore, the study also showed that the subjects who experienced an improvement in their cholesterol profile along with higher HDL levels and higher HDL: LDL ratio were the ones taking coconut oil. Those taking soybean oil did not receive the same benefits but reflected a higher total cholesterol as well as higher LDL cholesterol lower, lower HDL cholesterol and a lower HDL: LDL ratio.

Assists in bone health and chronic fatigue

Research has found coconut oil to help prevent osteoporosis because it helps in the nutrient absorption of minerals such as calcium and magnesium - important minerals that fight osteoporosis.

Moreover, the medium-chain fatty acids in coconut oil produce energy rather than body fat, thereby improving metabolism and preventing fatigue. The oil has also been shown to destroy organisms in the body that sap its strength and contribute to the condition of fatigue.

Others - aside from the health benefits mentioned earlier the following health benefits have been attributed to the beneficial use of coconut oil:

- Protects against cancer and HIV and other infectious diseases
- Kills bacteria and parasites like tape worm and liver flukes
- Eases acid reflux, aids in proper bowel function
- Lowers incidence of hemorrhoids
- Heals and relieves intestinal problems
- Soothes earaches
- Deals with symptoms connected with prostate enlargement
- Strengthens the liver and protects against degeneration
- Reduces incidence of epileptic seizures
- Reduces joint and muscle inflammation
- Eases neuropathies and itching from diabetes

How much oil should be taken in to enjoy its benefits? According to researchers, an adult should consume around 3 1/2 tbsps. of coconut oil daily: an amount equal to the MCFA a nursing infant would receive in one day. The

benefits of coconut oil are derived from the nutritional value of medium-chain fatty acids (MCFA's), and the best comparison in nature as to the percentage of MCFA consumed in a diet is in human breast milk. For those who are not used to having coconut oil in their diet, it is best to start out with a lesser amount and see how the body reacts before following the recommended amount.

Does coconut oil have any adverse side effects?

Coconut oil has no known side effects. However, if you are used to a low-fat diet, a common adverse reaction would be diarrhea. It is probably not advisable to start with a large amount right away. Spreading the recommended amount over the course of one day and building up to a larger dose can help to avoid unwanted effects.

In coconut-producing countries, it is considered beneficial for pregnant and lactating women to enjoy coconut oil; Westerners used to a low-fat diet, however, are cautioned not to experiment with coconut oil while pregnant if the body is not used to it. If you have been consuming coconut oil regularly with no adverse reactions, there is no reason to discontinue consumption.