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Coconut Oil

Posted on 07/10/2009 at 05:50:44 PM by Student Blogger
By: [Emily C.](#)

Giving saturated fat another chance.
Saturated fat has long held a bad rep and been noted for its potential to contribute to cardiovascular disease. So you might understand why I was a bit skeptical of all the hype surrounding the supposedly miracle-working power of coconut oil, which is composed of saturated fatty acids. However, if there's one thing I have learned as a nutrition student, it is that research has the potential to change our views as we continue to expand our knowledge and make new discoveries.



So, why should you try this stuff?
Coconut oil is a medium chain fatty acid (MCFA).

Because coconut oil is made of primarily medium chain (and some short chain) fatty acids, it is broken down immediately for use rather than stored. MCFAs aren't packaged into chylomicrons for circulation through the lymph like long chain fatty acids (LCFA). Instead, they are transported in the portal blood to the liver for conversion into energy. This quick conversion process may prevent weight gain as long as the calories consumed as coconut oil do not exceed the body's caloric needs. Coconut oil has also been found to speed metabolism and increase energy expenditure and is of great interest for its potential as a weight loss aid.

Coconut oil may prevent and alleviate disease.
Both research and clinical studies have shown that MCFAs may be useful in treating and preventing diseases such as diabetes, osteoporosis, virus-related diseases (mononucleosis, hepatitis C, herpes, etc.), gallbladder disease, Crohn's disease, and cancer. The smaller size of MCFAs (compared to LCFA) allows them to be digested more easily, making them ideal for those suffering from digestive diseases. Coconut oil may assist in the absorption and retaining of calcium, thereby benefiting bones.

Coconut oil has antimicrobial, antiviral, and antifungal properties.
Lipid-coated bacteria and viruses contain a lipid coat which encloses their DNA among other cellular materials. When consumed by humans, coconut oil disrupts the lipid membrane, killing the pathogens without damaging the host or harming health-promoting intestinal bacteria. The antimicrobial properties stem from the monoglycerides and free fatty acids (mainly lauric acid and capric acid) that compose coconut oil.

Need more reasons to start consuming coconut oil?
Pure coconut oil is easily absorbed, prevents free radical damage, and can improve the appearance of skin and hair. Coconut oil, which becomes liquid when heated above 75°F, can also be substituted into your favorite baked goods (such as the delicious looking cupcakes I created using coconut oil below).



With all the benefits that coconut oil can provide, it's definitely worth trying. And if you find that you don't quite like the taste, I hear it makes a fantastic conditioner.

References:
Fife B. (2004). *The Coconut Oil Miracle*. New York: Avery.
Papamandjaris A, MacDougall D, Jones P. Medium chain fatty acid metabolism and energy expenditure: obesity treatment implications. *Life Sciences* 1998;62: 1203-121.

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17 Comments
Posted Jul 13, 2009 7:48 PM by Tyler

Thanks for the great information! I would love to try baking something with coconut oil...especially those cupcakes!

Posted Jul 14, 2009 10:20 AM by [insideandancing](#)

Thanks for this - I just ordered a free sample of coconut oil and can't wait to try it!

Posted Jul 14, 2009 7:00 PM by [Caitlin](#)

Informative post! My mom began asking me all about coconut oil after hearing about its use as an anti-fungal agent. I also love it for me skin.

Posted Jul 14, 2009 7:14 PM by [Caleb Kelly](#)

ummm....what about serum lipids?

Posted Jul 14, 2009 8:16 PM by [Emily](#)

Hi Caleb. Thanks so much for your comment. Because coconut oil is made predominantly of MCFAs (burned almost immediately for energy and not converted into body fat or cholesterol to the degree other fats are), it does not contribute to elevated serum lipids. Bruce Fife, a coconut oil expert, states that no legitimate research has ever demonstrated any proof that natural, nonhydrogenated coconut oil adversely affects blood cholesterol levels.

Coconut oil has actually been noted for its potential to prevent heart disease.

This sounds really contrary to what most of us have been taught, but the recent discussion and debate at the Experimental Biology conference on the contribution of carbohydrates versus fat to the development of cardiovascular disease shows that this is an area of study which requires further research.

Feel free to send further commentary to emilymcarlson@gmail.com

Thanks so much!

Posted Jul 15, 2009 8:59 AM by [Carl](#)

Thank you for your informative article. You have inspired me to do more study on this subject.

Posted Jul 15, 2009 4:05 PM by [Daphne Parker](#)

I'm excited to try coconut oil as a substitute for butter.

Posted Jul 15, 2009 4:20 PM by [Harini](#)

Excellent post. The only thing that I would caution about would be to evaluate your sources, because along with palm oil, coconut oil has quite a strong lobby behind it, as it serves as a major cash crop in a large part of the world. This is also true for oils that have gained mainstream acceptance such as olive oil. But I think your post does a good job of illustrating that there is room for a variety of fats as part of a balanced diet.

Posted Jul 26, 2010 7:27 AM by [Barb at Phen375](#)

There are certainly a lot of benefits to Coconut Oil. I will make sure I put it on my next shopping list.

Posted Jul 26, 2010 9:07 AM by [FibreTrim Reviews](#)

Not sure about the health benefits of coconut oil to be honest. My friend swears by it but I have yet to be convinced....although I do like eating the Bounty chocolate bar....not sure its the same thing though!! :)

Posted Jul 28, 2010 10:00 AM by [Bella The Healthy](#)

Valuable and insightful. Coconut oil has been used by Asian for centuries and we've not heard about heart disease back then. Your post does a good job of illustrating that there is room for a variety of fats as part of a balanced diet. Fat and fat and too much of fat whether saturated or unsaturated can be harmful. We must strike a balance.

Posted Jul 28, 2010 5:42 PM by [Growth in Trinidad](#)

Growing up in Trinidad it was common for babies to be rubbed down with coconut oil. It really does make your skin feel wonderful and silky - the smell can be an issue though :-)

I've also started to cook with coconut oil because it can tolerate higher temperatures.

Posted Jul 30, 2010 3:44 PM by [Jessica Ekengren](#)

Great article - I am going to have to look into it further

Posted Jul 31, 2010 5:52 AM by [factora59](#)

I hear that coconut oil has been shown to increase metabolism and assist in burning unwanted fat, and that it is the only oil that is suitable for high heat cooking (when its raw, organic, unrefined coconut oil), and that Olive oil and flax seed oil are two wonderful oils to use for salad dressing or on cooked or raw veggies. Is it true, however, that butter is a good fat and can actually help you lose weight in a healthy eating diet?

Posted Aug 02, 2010 5:50 PM by [Pammy J](#)

Coconut oil is one of the most stable oils you can buy and it does not turn rancid easily. Look for high quality coconut oil that includes the words "unrefined," "organic" and "virgin" on their label. Its great for baking! I have an Australian friend and they introduced me to Choc-chips Crackles - delicious and oh so easy. Unfortunately the recipe requires Coptis and that is not found in the USA but I have managed to track down a recipe for a Rice Krispie Crackle that is also delicious. Ingredients: 4 cups Rice Krispies 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar 3 tablespoons cocoa 250 grams solid coconut oil (I used LouAna brand) Preparation 1. In a large bowl, mix the Rice Krispies, powdered sugar, cocoa, and coconut oil (if using). 2. Over low heat, melt the coconut oil in a saucepan and allow to cool slightly. 3. Add to Rice Krispies mixture and stir until well combined. 4. Spoon mixture into cupcake liners and refrigerate until firm. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve. I'm not sure how many it's supposed to make, but I used 12 regular cupcake liners. You could easily make them smaller and get 24, or use mini liners

Posted Aug 02, 2010 9:13 PM by [ChristaBell](#)

Coconut Oil is very good for you. We use coconut oil a lot in the Caribbean (in Jamaica). We also use it for medicinal purposes when mixed with garlic. The natural coconut is also eaten by us and provides a lot of nutrients before the oil is extracted. My blood type also allows me to use coconut oil in moderation.

Posted Aug 03, 2010 12:44 PM by [Rob](#)

Be aware that some coconut oils are better than others. This is because some manufacturing processes may destroy many of the original benefits contained within the coconut oil, especially heat treatments.



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