



**TOPIC: COCONUT BENEFITS**

**Guess what? Some saturated fats are healthy!**

Until recently few researchers were familiar with the incredible health benefits of the unique saturated fats found in coconut oil. [For several decades] Coconut oil was shunned because of misconceptions regarding dietary fat. This situation is beginning to change as the amazing nutritional and therapeutic benefits of tropical oils become better known. Adapted from [Jon J. Kabara, PhD](#), Foreword, *The Coconut Oil Miracle*, [Bruce Fife, ND](#)

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# NEWS nutrition

## Coconut Secret!

- **What Do You Know About Coconut?**
- **What Are Its Health Benefits?**
- **How Does It Promote Weight Loss?**
- **How Does It Relate To Alzheimer's?**
- **Why Is It A Perfect Sports Drink?**

**You Can't Imagine How Great  
This Food Is For Us! Look Inside....**

## Coconut Secret!

A Coconut Tsunami is coming! Many of us are involved with the ground swell. We can eat it! We can drink it! We can cook with it! We can put it on our bodies! That's just the beginning. Coconut promotes weight loss; helps prevent the major degenerative diseases; strengthens our immune systems; and improves our digestion. Further, it has antibiotic, antiviral, and antifungal properties. That's not all! One coconut component may even stop the downward spiral of some neuro-degenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's.

Already given the designation *functional food*, this delicious fruit has so many benefits that "superfood" is a more apt description. As Americans learn about the health attributes of the coconut, its uses as a cooking oil, sports drink, natural sweetener, and moisturizer are becoming known. In fact, using coconut internally and externally puts it squarely in Nature's Medicine Cabinet. All this riches from the humble coconut. Read on....

## I've Got A Lovely Bunch Of Coconuts!

Coconut flesh, coconut milk, coconut oil, coconut water, and coconut sugar. These foods have been nourishing people in the tropics for thousands of generations. Among these peoples, the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) is called "the tree of life". Used not only as a food source and a medicine, every part is utilized within their lifestyle.<sup>1</sup>

**The Philippines is the world's largest producer of coconuts and coconut products.** The industry is so large that one-third of the Philippine people is involved in it. With the growing demand, other countries with tropical geography (e.g., Brazil) are amping up their production.

In the US, most of us are familiar with coconut through coconut confections, like coconut macaroons. This coconut comes from the coco's dried flesh, called *copra*. It is the basis for shredded coconut, coconut chips, coconut flour (a gluten-free product which can be used to extend wheat flour or in its place), and for animal feed. It is pressed to produce coconut milk and coconut oil (as is fresh coconut flesh). Coconut water occurs naturally in the center of the coconut. (See "Siri Says", on the back page.) Coconut crystals ("sugar") and coconut syrup are produced from the nectar of the tree's flowers.<sup>2</sup>

## What's The BIG Secret?

**What gives coconut its startling health benefits? The answer is coconut oil!**

That's right. The biggest secret to coconut's health and medicinal attributes is the oil. **Coconut oil is 86 percent saturated fat. (Don't get nervous!)** Infamously promoted as the "bad" fat, it's the saturated fat in coconut that delivers most of its health benefits. Thirty years after scorning all saturated fat and removing the coconut oil from baked goods and other products, we learn 1) There is more than one type of saturated fat; 2) Not all saturated fat is bad; and 3) That found in coconut oil is very good for us.

**The key difference between the saturated fats in coconut oil and those from animals and other plant sources is in the molecular structure.** Those derived from meat, milk products, eggs, and most vegetable oils are primarily *long-chain fatty acids* (LCFAs). However, 67 percent of the saturated fat from coconut is comprised mainly of medium-chain fatty acids (MCFAs).

Coconut oil (and its tropical relatives palm and palm kernel oils) are unique in the percentage of medium- and short-chain fatty acids they contain.<sup>3</sup> Because of this, coconut oil produces a totally different response in the body than the fats from the usual plant and animal sources. **Coconut MCFAs are used as energy rather than being stored as body fat** (or worse lining the arteries and organs such as the heart and liver). Coconut oil is only stored as fat when more calories are consumed than are used. All other fats are stored as body fat (adipose tissue).

There are two more important facts to know. First, "MCT" appears on the ingredient list of some energy bars and sports products. **MCT = medium-chain triglycerides and is 100 percent MCFAs.** (Although coconut oil is 60 percent MCFAs, oil from the whole coconut delivers something undefined as Dr. Mary Newport discovered. See sidebar opposite.)

**Secondly, lauric acid is the predominant MCFA in coconut oil and makes up about 50 percent of coconut's fat content.**<sup>4</sup> Tropical oils are the only source of this substance. All other plant oils are devoid of both lauric acid and all other MCFAs.

## Don't Bug Me!

**Perhaps coconut oil's most amazing property is its effect against microorganisms, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, yeasts, parasites, and even (not so micro-) worms.**



Lauric acid and the other MCFAs give coconut oil these antimicrobial properties. With the exception of palm kernel oil and butter (which contains up to 15% short- and medium-chain fatty acids), these properties are generally missing from other plant and animal fats.

Coconut oil as it comes from the coconut (or from the container) has no known antimicrobial properties. Rather, **when we eat coconut oil, our bodies convert it into a form that is deadly to microbes.** Lauric acid, broken down into monolaurin, is the most lethal. Lauric acid gets its name from the bay laurel tree. (Yes, *those* bay leaves.) The seed oil of the laurel tree is 50 percent lauric acid. Understandably, coconut oil is a more viable commercial source.

**Microorganisms killed by MCFAs** (mainly as monolaurin) **include the following viruses:** HIV, measles, herpes, Epstein-Barr, influenza, leukemia, pneumonovirus, and hepatitis C.<sup>5</sup>

1 For a detailed description of the broad utility of the coconut, check out the [Philippine Coconut Authority](#).

2 These natural coconut sweeteners are discussed in [Nutrition News](#), "Sweet Nothings".

3 SCFA, short-chain fatty acids, have this moniker because they carry fewer than six carbon atoms in their molecular structure. Medium-chain have 6-12. On the other hand, long-chain and very long-chain can carry up to 22.

4 In addition to lauric acid, coconut oil contains these other important fatty acids: myristic, 18%; caprylic acid, 8%; capric acid, 7%; and caproic acid, 0.5%.

5 Those you may not have heard of include sarcoma, syncytial, human lymphotropic, vesicular stomatitis, visna, cytomegalovirus, coxsackie B4, and junin viruses.

The following bacteria are likewise vulnerable to coconut oil: *Streptococcus*, *Staphylococcus*, *Neisseria*, *Chlamydia*, *H. pylori*, acne bacteria, and a number of other gram positive organisms, such as tetanus and botulism. Quite a Rogue's Gallery, isn't it?!

But that is not all. *Candida albicans* yeast as well as a number of fungi and parasites are susceptible to coconut oil's digested MCFAs. Unlike antibiotics, which are usually used for these infections, coconut oil and Laurecedin<sup>®</sup>, don't promote bacterial resistance.<sup>6</sup>

The individual protocols for using coconut oil and/or MCT and/or monolaurin against the microbes listed above can be searched online.

### "Slurshing"

**Have you heard of oil pulling?** An age old Ayurvedic technique, this is a way of detoxifying and healing your body through oral cleansing. Recent research has shown a direct link between oral health and chronic illness.



First thing in the morning, you rinse your mouth with a tablespoon or two of vegetable oil for 15 minutes to half hour. (We call it "slurshing" because that is the sound it makes.) **This action "pulls" the bacteria from your teeth and mouth.** After, spit out the oil (never swallow), then brush and use a mouthwash if you like.

To learn more, search "oil pulling therapy" or buy the book of the same name by Bruce Fife, CN, ND. We will be covering this topic in more depth in our upcoming issue of *Nutrition News*, "Smile Pretty!".

## Boost Your Energy – Reduce Your Weight!

In *Coconut Oil Miracle*, author Bruce Fife, CN, ND, writes, "Eating foods containing MCFAs is like putting high-octane fuel into your car." MCFAs are a more efficient fuel than other fats.

Fats, other than coconut oil, pass through a complex digestive process, eventually emptying into the bloodstream by means of lymph fluid in the villi of the small intestine. Then, they are transported to the cells where they are stored as fat, which is used as fuel and for other needs. However, **coconut oil, because it is composed of MCFAs, is absorbed directly into the bloodstream, like the glucose from carbohydrates.** Once absorbed by the cells, energy begins to be generated.

Unlike carbs, MCFAs have no effect on blood sugar levels nor do they require insulin to enter cells. (This is true of all fats.) The surprise is that they don't require enzymes to penetrate the walls of the mitochondria (the powerhouses of the cells). Here is an efficient energy source, unknown to most Western people.

**No surprise, that boost in energy has a commensurate boost in metabolism. And, in fact, that rise is documented to last for 24 hours.** When cells function at greater efficiency, they deliver both better protection from illness and faster healing. Cell death and regeneration occur more quickly. The immune system functions better overall. Oppositely, **slow metabolism is a marker for several degenerative conditions, including obesity, heart disease, and osteoporosis.**

A number of animal studies show that just replacing long-chain fatty acids (LCFAs) as they occur in polyunsaturated oils, such as canola and safflower oils, with coconut oil has resulted in less fat being deposited. Anecdotally, it has also resulted in effortless weight loss.

**Eating coconut oil also has an effect on thermogenesis,** heat production by the body.<sup>7</sup> Whenever we eat, diet-induced

## Can Coconut Save Your Coconut?

It is currently estimated that over 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease. In another 20 years that number will have doubled, and by 2050,



without a cure, Alzheimer's has the potential to have affected over 19 million individuals. This is attributed to our aging population and to the fact that there is no cure. Not a normal part of aging, research from the National Institute on Aging indicates that the prevalence of the disease doubles every five years beyond age 65.

In her engaging book *Alzheimer's Disease: What If There Was A Cure?*, author **Mary T. Newport, MD, tells the encouraging story of her husband Steve and how, using coconut oil, she was able to stop and even reverse his progress into Alzheimer's.** Mary started with coconut oil alone and had immediate and amazing results. Later she learned about MCT, used it and then found that the combo worked the best for Steve.

**Mary got great results, even though Steve is an ApoE4 carrier.**<sup>8</sup> Her book is highly documented and very informative, explaining not only how coconut oil and MCT work but providing a great deal of other fascinating information.

**How does coconut oil work?** As discussed earlier, coconut oil goes directly to the liver rather than through the usual digestive channels. The liver converts the medium-chain fatty acids into *ketones*. Ketones are tiny molecules of fuel which can not only cross the blood-brain barrier but penetrate the mitochondria, feeding the cells.

**Why is this important?** In the case of Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases, segments of the brain become insulin resistant. You may recall that the brain's main fuel is glucose (blood sugar). Insulin makes it possible for the brain (and all our cells) to uptake glucose. **The insulin resistant brain is unable to utilize blood sugar, which means it cannot receive glucose as fuel.** All these brains are starved for fuel.

**Ketones are an alternative fuel for the brain.** (And, like all fats, doesn't require insulin for uptake.) That is why coconut oil and MCT work. Mary states that she wrote her book to support research into developing ketones as a stand-alone product, cutting out the digestive "middleman" and making it possible to fuel the brain without having to be tethered to coconut oil and MCT. (Steve began by taking 3T of coconut oil 3x/d, a total of 1/2c + 1T. As much as I like saturated fat, even I can imagine that this would get old.)

**Insulin resistance of certain segments of the brain cells is a marker of many neurodegenerative diseases, including Parkinson's, Huntington's, Lou Gehrig's (ALS), and MS.** When I searched coconut oil + the specific disease, I read many testimonials by people claiming life-changing results.

FYI: All the information in this sidebar was gleaned from Mary T. Newport's book. Dr. Newport's specialty is neonatology.

<sup>6</sup> Laurecedin<sup>®</sup> is the only clinically tested isolated monolaurin and is available as a supplement in natural product stores.

<sup>7</sup> There are 3 kinds of thermogenesis: 1) exercise-induced thermogenesis, 2) non-exercise-induced thermogenesis (eg, shivering), and 3) diet-induced thermogenesis.

<sup>8</sup> ApoE4 is a genetic marker heightening the risk of developing AD. In clinical studies with AD drugs, people with this marker do not do as well as those without it.

thermogenesis occurs. The ensuing cellular activity uses about 10 percent of the calories ingested. Different foods have different thermogenic effects. Protein rich food is well known for its thermogenic and energizing effects. Paradoxically, this is not true of overeating. Overeating is not energizing; rather it is enervating. It puts tremendous stress on the body and often results in the eater needing a nap.

**Coconut oil revs up our metabolism even more than protein.** This increase in metabolic rate yields greater calorie consumption, leading to weight loss. In a study summarized by Fife, healthy weight individuals eating a meal containing MCT (medium-chain triglycerides) showed a post-meal energy expenditure 48 percent over normal. **In obese individuals, energy expenditure increased by 65 percent!**

**Remember two things: 1)** This effect lasts 24 hours; and **2)** even though coconut oil increases your metabolism, you will still gain weight if you eat more calories than you expend.

## Heart Of The Matter

The original criticism of coconut oil was that since it is a saturated fat and too much saturated fat produces too much cholesterol and cholesterol clogs the arteries, coconut oil must be bad. **There are no studies showing that nonhydrogenated coconut oil increases cholesterol.<sup>9</sup> Rather, studies show that it has a neutral effect on cholesterol levels.**

Further research has shown that coconut oil does not have a negative effect on triglyceride levels (amount of fat in the blood). It doesn't make the blood sticky and thus, susceptible to clotting. **In fact, coconut oil consumption has shown many factors associated with a reduced risk of heart disease,** including decreased fat being deposited, lower liver cholesterol, higher survival rates, and, in population studies, lower incidence of heart disease. Plus, coconut oil protects the heart against viral and bacterial infections.

Historically, the interest in coconut oil and heart disease began with studies of Pacific Island populations. **Islanders eating their traditional diet don't get heart disease.** (They are also free of cancer and other degenerative diseases.) Although there are other reasons for this (for starters, more exercise, more plant foods, more fish), the main reason appears to be the protective effect of coconut oil in their diets.

On the other hand, **when native populations change their diets to our Western version, eating refined polyunsaturated fats, heart disease risk increases.** One example comes from Kerala, India. In 1979, fewer than three people in a thousand had heart problems. After a huge campaign in the 1980s to convince the populace that coconut oil was unhealthy, processed vegetable oil replaced coconut oil in many families. By 1993, the heart disease rate had tripled.

<sup>9</sup> *Caveat Emptor!* Hydrogenated coconut oil must be labeled and any trans fats (only found in hydrogenated fats) must be revealed on the ingredient list. You should never see this type of coconut oil in a natural product store.

Throughout this issue, you see underlined blue words. These indicate hyperlinks.

When you subscribe online, one click on the underline takes you to the web and further information about the underlined topic.

## Time For An Oil Change

**It seems clear that replacing polyunsaturated processed vegetable oils with coconut oil is a healthy change.** However, be sure you *replace* the fats. If you *add* to them, you risk gaining weight.

Secondly, **the body needs two essential fatty acids that coconut doesn't provide.** The EFAs are linoleic acid and alpha-linolenic acid. Linoleic acid, an omega-6 fatty acid, occurs widely in plant oils. (Grape oil is a good choice at 69% linoleic acid or eat a handful of almonds at 24%.) Alpha-linolenic is an omega-3 fatty acid, which is converted to EPA and DHA by the body. (Whole flaxseed and/or walnuts and/or their oils can meet this need.) The body needs less than 1T/d of these combined oils.

**Fife recommends 2.5-3.5T of coconut oil daily, used in food and for cooking.** Besides supporting healthy people, coconut oil is therapeutic for infants and old people, those with diabetes, with digestive problems (including gall bladder conditions), and, of course, individuals with neurodegenerative disorders whose needs for the oil will be far greater than normal.

*Siri Says:* **What about coconut water?** Currently the quality of some brands of commercial coconut water is being questioned. Of course, raw is best but it is also the most expensive. **My opinion is that as long as it has no sugar added, coconut water far surpasses any sports drink as a source of electrolytes.** As a testimonial to its purity and efficacy, the raw water direct from the coconut has been successfully used as an intravenous liquid in cases of dehydration. Incidentally, except where noted, all the information in this issue was gleaned from *The Coconut Oil Miracle, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 2013 by Bruce Fife, CN, ND.



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PO Box 55279, Riverside, California 92517-5279

[www.NutritionNews.com](http://www.NutritionNews.com)

Email [behealthy@nutritionnews.com](mailto:behealthy@nutritionnews.com)

P: 800.784.7550 F: 951.848.0595

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