

# Discover the power of coconut milk

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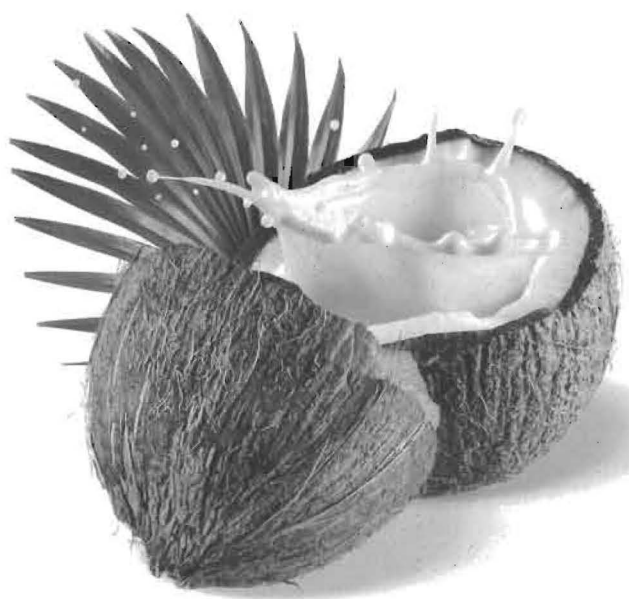
With its creamy texture and slight natural sweetness, coconut milk is often considered a “miracle liquid” since coconut milk nutrition offers great ability to build up the body’s immune defenses and prevent diseases.

Coconut milk is a product obtained by extracting the juice out of coconut meat. Coconut milk contains about 17-24% fat, depending upon the amount of water used for its preparation.

Coconut milk is rich in healthy saturated fat and energy. It contains Vitamin B, C and E and is also a good source minerals like Potassium, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorous, Calcium, Sodium, Copper, Manganese, Selenium and Zinc.

Coconut milk is a treasure trove of medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs). Nature’s richest dietary source of medium chain fatty acids are coconut oil (64%) and palm kernel oil (58%). MCFAs in coconut oil consist of 48% lauric acid, 8% caprylic acid, 7% capric acid and 0.5% caproic acids. The most active components among these fatty acids are lauric acid and capric acid. These fatty acids give coconut milk its amazing antimicrobial properties and are generally absent in all other vegetables and animal oils.

Researches show that the presence of medium chain fatty acids in mother’s milk is the primary ingredient that protects new born infants from infections for the first few months, while their immune system is in the developing state. The fatty acids that make coconut milk so effective against germs are the same ones nature has put into mother’s milk to protect infants. Dr. Jon J Kabara, Consultant, Michigan State University, USA has done pioneered studies on the antimicrobial properties of fatty acids in the 1980s. Two of his most important conclusions are that lauric acid is the most active antimicrobial fatty acid and that monolaurin is the most effective antimicrobial compound that can be derived from coco chemicals. According to him, MCFAs in coconut milk are similar to fats in mother’s milk and have similar nutraceutical benefits.



As MCFAs gets immediately broken down and absorbed by the cells, they do not circulate in the bloodstream to the degree that other fats do. Consequently they do not get packed away inside fat cells or clog artery walls. They are used to produce energy, not fat cells and not arterial plaque. This makes coconut milk juice an ideal health drink for people suffering from diabetes, obesity, gall bladder diseases, pancreatitis, crohn’s diseases and pancreatic insufficiency.

#### As an anti-oxidants

What do the conditions like : heart disease, cancer, hypertension, wrinkled skin, aging spots, arthritis, cataracts and failing memory have in common? You might say they are all conditions associated with aging, but age is not the only cause. The one thing that ties all these together, as well as most other degenerative diseases, is free radicals.

Free radicals are renegade molecular entities that cause destruction throughout the body. Free radicals are unstable molecules that have lost an electron, causing

them to become highly active. In an effort to achieve equilibrium, they steal electrons from neighboring molecules. A chain reaction occurs where hundreds and even thousands of molecules are affected. Once a molecule becomes a free radical, its physical and chemical properties change. The normal function of such molecules is permanently disrupted, thus affecting the entire cell of which they are a part. A living cell attacked by free radical degenerates and becomes dysfunctional. It is the accumulation of this damage over many years that result in the degeneration and loss of functioning of the cells that typifies the symptoms of old age. In fact, some researchers believe that free radicals are the primary cause of aging.

Free radicals are a product of oxidation in our body. As a means of self protection, our body produces many antioxidants that can stop free radical chain reactions. Many nutrients in our food such as vitamin C and E also act as antioxidants. The antioxidants and free radicals present in human body depend upon the types of food they eat and also the environment they live in. Coconut milk contains saturated fatty acids which are chemically very stable and resistant to oxidation. They act as powerful anti oxidants by protecting unsaturated fats from oxidation, thus preventing the development of cancer.

### **Heart Diseases**

The oil present in coconut milk tends to increase HDL cholesterol and improve the cholesterol profile. HDL is the good cholesterol that helps protect against heart disease. Total blood cholesterol, which includes both HDL (good) and LDL (bad) cholesterol, is a very

inaccurate indicator of heart disease risk. A much more accurate way to judge heart disease risk is to separate the two types of cholesterol. Therefore, the ratio of the bad to good cholesterol (LDL,HDL) is universally recognized as a far more accurate indicator of heart disease risk. Because of coconut oil's tendency to increase HDL, consumption of coconut milk improves the cholesterol ratio and thus decreases risk of heart disease.

Studies in 1970s and 1980s indicated that coconut oil is heart friendly. Compared to other dietary oils, coconut oil consumption was found to reduce the risk of heart disease by improving cholesterol readings, lowering levels of blood and liver cholesterol, lowering body fat deposition, reducing tendency to form blood clots, reducing uncontrolled free radicals in cells and increasing antioxidant reserves in cells. These studies alone shows coconut oil as healthy or at least benign for heart.

But there is another factor that is even more important, that reveals coconut oil as not simply a benign bystander but a very important player in the battle against heart disease. Heart disease is caused by atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) which is manifested by the formation of plaque in the arteries. According to recent studies, atherosclerosis initially develops as a result of injury in the inner lining of the arterial wall caused by certain toxins, free radicals, viruses, or bacteria. If the cause of the injury is not removed, it will result in further damage of arterial wall. As long as irritation and inflammation persist scar tissue continues to develop.

Special blood clotting proteins called platelets circulate freely in the blood. Whenever an injury is occurred, these platelets become sticky and act as a bandage to the damaged tissue for facilitating healing. This is how blood clots are formed. The injury inside the artery wall triggers the release of protein growth factors that stimulate growth of the muscle cells within the artery walls. A complex mixture of scar tissue, platelets, calcium, cholesterol and triglycerides are incorporated into the site to heal the injury. This mass of tissue forms arterial plaque. When this process occurs in the coronary artery, which feeds the heart, it is referred to as coronary heart disease

A number of studies have reported associations between heart disease and chronic bacterial and viral infections. Studies made on animals have provided more direct evidence that bacteria might contribute to chronic inflammation and plaque formation.

The bacterias (*Helicobacter pylori* and *Chlamydia pneumonia*) and viruses (CMV) that are most commonly associated with atherosclerosis can be destroyed by the MCFAs present in coconut milk. The MCFA in coconut milk are known to kill all three major atherogenic organisms. MCFAs are powerful germ fighters and are



known to kill dozens of disease causing organisms. Not only can coconut milk help protect you from the germs that cause ulcers, lung infections and herpes but also heart disease and stroke.

### Diabetes

The two most common types of diabetes are type 1 and type 2. Type 1 occurs when pancreas in our body is unable to produce enough insulin needed for the body. In type 2 diabetes, the pancreas may be able to produce normal amount of insulin, but the cells in our body have become unresponsive to it. This is called insulin resistance. A low-fat diet is generally recommended for diabetes because fats are believed to increase the risk of obesity and heart disease, both of which are associated with diabetes. However, the MCFAs present in coconut milk can be one of the best cures for diabetic patients. Glucose as well as long chain fatty acids require insulin to enter the cells. Medium chain fatty acids present in coconut milk do not need insulin. They can pass through the cell membrane and enter without it. Not only do MCFAs pass through the cell membrane with ease, but they also penetrate the mitochondria (energy producing organs of cell) without assistance. Mitochondria take glucose and fatty acids and transform them into energy required by the cell. Mitochondria has a double membrane, making it impossible for glucose and fatty acids to enter without the aid of special carriers called carnitine transferase. MCFAs can penetrate the double mitochondrial membrane without the assistance of this enzyme. They are also oxidized faster to carbon dioxide with energy liberation. Therefore, they can provide cells with nourishment whether insulin is present or not. When you drink coconut milk, you give your cells a boost of energy. It helps supply energy to cells because it is easily absorbed without the need of enzymes or insulin.

### Liver Diseases

The most common liver problems we hear about are hepatitis and cirrhosis which can be fatal. Various factors can cause hepatitis; among them are alcohol, drugs, viruses and bacteria. Three types of hepatitis, known as hepatitis A, B and C are caused by viral infections.

Two most destructive enemies of liver are viruses and free radicals – both of which can be protected against by the regular consumption of coconut milk. Studies show that MCFAs can prevent alcohol-induced liver injury by inhibiting free radical formation. Several other studies have also shown that fatty acids found in coconut milk protect the liver from alcohol-induced free-radical injury and tissue death. Several doctors recommend using fatty acids (from tropical oils) as a dietary treatment for alcoholic liver diseases. Consumption of coconut milk could be beneficial in this regard.

Of all the organs in the body, liver probably receives the greatest benefit from coconut milk. The liver is under

constant stress, filtering out waste, neutralizing toxins, dismantling and reconstructing fats and proteins, storing and producing energy, and performing a hundred other functions. Diseases causing germs and free radicals constantly attack the liver, affecting its function. MCFAs from coconut milk help relieve the stress by stopping free radicals and killing harmful germs. Coconut milk also functions as a natural detoxification agent by neutralizing the effects of poisons. Drinking coconut milk gives the liver a break, reducing its work load, protecting it from free radicals and supplying it with energy. The MCFAs in coconut milk is used by liver as a source of fuel to generate power and metabolism. Thus, it improves the functioning of liver.

### Conclusion

Coconut has been used both as a food and medicine for centuries in many cultures throughout the world. Traditional forms of medicine use coconut milk and oil for a wide variety of health problems, ranging from the treatment of burns and constipation to influenza. Modern medical research is now confirming the effectiveness of coconut milk for many of these conditions. Research over last decade has demonstrated that the medium chain fatty acids in coconut milk are digested and metabolized differently from those of other fats. This difference gives the coconut milk many health benefits obtained from no other sources. It has been recommended for use in the treatment of malnutrition because it provides a quick and easy source of nutrition. It also improves the absorption of minerals (particularly calcium and magnesium), B-vitamins and fat soluble vitamins as well as amino acids. It stimulates metabolism, increases energy and improve thyroid function, all of which aid in reducing unwanted body fat. For these reasons, it has gained a reputation as being the world's only natural low-calorie fat beverage and researchers have recommended this for preventing obesity. Coconut milk is also healthy for heart. It does not negatively affect blood cholesterol, does not promote stickiness that leads to blood clot formation and does not collect in arteries. Even it possesses anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and antioxidant properties, all of which protect arteries from arteriosclerosis and from heart diseases.

In a nutshell, coconut milk is a miracle food and the uses of it are countless. A daily sip of coconut milk helps you stay healthy and live long ■

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