


Coconut in Ayurveda

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insights into the medicinal properties of coconut that is in tune with the scientific findings of today. Modern research has in many ways rediscovered with greater clarity what ancient Ayurvedic physicians had cherished through generations of medical practice. Let us take the issue of the effect of coconut on the cardiovascular system for instance. Coconut oil was condemned a few decades ago for its high percentage of saturated fats that could damage the blood vessels and cause coronary heart disease. It is only in recent times that it has been discovered that the saturated fat in



A critical evaluation of the health benefits of coconut has been attempted several centuries ago in India through the Ayurvedic system of medicine. The situation seems to be ripe to corroborate this ancient wisdom with the latest scientific research findings in our attempt to place coconut once again on the high pedestal of health promoting agents that nature has benevolently gifted for human beings.

The usage of coconut for health seems to have been promoted mainly through the regional expression of Ayurveda in Kerala. In fact, most of the Ayurvedic texts describe coconut as the plant of the Southern region – dakshinatyā. This situation is true even in modern times. The four states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra account for more than 90 per cent of the production of coconut in India with Kerala contributing the lion's share. It is not surprising therefore, that the Ayurvedic physicians of Kerala took the initiative to discover and apply the medicinal properties of coconut for health. However, the usage of coconut products spread across the length and breadth of the country not only for medicinal but also for religious purposes.

A careful perusal of the classical Ayurvedic texts help us to understand that Ayurveda has gained deep

Coconut is heavy, oily, pacifies heat, sweet and cool. It improves musculature, maintains cardiovascular health, promotes growth and cleanses the urinary bladder.

(Sushruta Samhita)

Coconut oil is aphrodisiac, heavy, nourishes depleted tissues, pacifies heat and exhaustion and is useful in treating diseases like diabetes, asthma, cough, wasting and injuries.

(Saligrama Nighantu)



Modern research has in many ways rediscovered with greater clarity what ancient Ayurvedic physicians had cherished through generations of medical practice. Ayurvedic texts characterize coconut oil as good for the heart and cardiovascular system. The Bhavaprakasha Nighantu mentions that coconut oil can reduce kapha, which helps the body to lose than gain weight.

in the management of a wide range of skin diseases including the infectious type. It is said to tone the digestive system and enhance the immunity of the individual. Interestingly enough, the Shaligrama Nighantu points out that coconut oil is useful for the management of the disease known as yakshma, a condition that resembles AIDS in many ways.

Ayurvedic texts describe the medicinal properties of coconut meat, tender coconut water, coconut milk, coconut ghee, coconut oil, coconut sugar, coconut flowers, fleshy top of stem, coconut root as well as toddy. Coconut fruit is classified into the tender, green, ripe dry and sprouted types and their medicinal properties are differentiated and described.

An appraisal of the medicinal properties of coconut as documented in the classical Ayurvedic literature assumes significance in the context of promoting its use for health care in the light of scientific research. It would indeed be an interesting exercise to corroborate ancient wisdom and modern knowledge to substantiate the beneficial effects of coconut for health, discover new areas for research and to rediscover less known applications of coconut that has been preserved by tradition for posterity. ■

coconut is the medium chain fatty acid (MCFA) type, which is metabolized quite differently from the way long chain fatty acids are metabolized. By promoting thyroid activity and providing instant energy, MCFA in coconut actually helps the body to reduce fat and thin down. It maintains cardiovascular health. Ayurvedic texts like the Kayyadeva Nighantu, Bhavaprakasha Nighantu and Raja Nighantu characterize coconut oil as hridyam or good for the heart and cardiovascular system. The Bhavaprakasha Nighantu mentions that coconut oil can reduce kapha, which actually helps the body to lose than gain weight.

The beneficial effects of coconut oil on skin were also well known to the ancient physicians. Coconut oil is said to be useful

