



The health benefits of Virgin Coconut Oil

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Research is revealing more and more properties of Virgin Coconut oil and its market demand is increasing many folds. We in Kerala should not hesitate to utilize this favorable condition to our benefit. The day is not far when doctors will prescribe 'Three teaspoon VC a day' to patients.

Virgin Coconut oil (VC) is the oil extracted from fresh coconut meat (not copra) by mechanical or natural means. The benefits of coconut oil become many fold in virgin coconut oil. To protect the oil's essential properties, the production of virgin coconut oil does not undergo chemical refining, bleaching, or deodorizing. Recent research has proved virgin coconut oil's effectiveness against many diseases. It is emerging now as the most valuable coconut product, with the Philippines as the major exporter. The export price ranges from \$US8.00 to \$12.00 per liter of cold processed oil. Local demand of this oil has also increased.

New Methods of Production

Virgin Coconut Oil retains the fresh scent and taste of coconuts, whereas the copra-based refined coconut oils have a bland taste due to the refining process. VC can be

obtained with or without using heat. In the traditional method practiced in Kerala homes, coconut milk is boiled to obtain virgin oil.

For obtaining virgin oil by Cold Processing method, coconut milk is kept for approximately half a day. (In the new method followed by many entrepreneurs coconut milk is refrigerated for 24 hours). During this time, the heavier water separates from the oil by sinking to the bottom, while the lighter coconut solids float to the top. In between the coconut solids and the water is a crystal clear coconut oil that is completely unrefined. The oil is then slightly heated (less than boiling temperatures) for a short time (5-15 minutes depending on air temperatures) to remove any remaining moisture, and then filtered. The result is a clear virgin coconut oil that retains the distinct scent and taste of coconut. This is a traditional method of coconut oil extraction that has been used in the Philippines for hundreds of years.

The Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasaragod has standardized virgin coconut oil process by developing the necessary equipment suitable for micro enterprise. The Coconut

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Development Board, Kochi and Central Food Technology Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore has developed a technology for production of Virgin Coconut Oil and Dietary Fiber from Coconut Milk. The technology will be transferred to entrepreneurs having experience in production and marketing.

Cold processing method is considered superior since heating will destroy some health promoting substances. According to the standards set by Department of Trade and Industry-Bureau of Product Standards of the Philippines (the worlds largest exporter of coconut oil), virgin coconut oil must be colourless, sediment free with natural fresh coconut scent and free from rancid odour or taste. It is required to have a maximum of 20% moisture and volatile content to prevent rancidity and should not contain food additives.

Rich in Nutrients

The virgin coconut oil is free from trans fatty acid and high in medium chain fats (MCFA), major one being lauric acid, which is identical to special group of fats found in human breast milk. Approximately 50% of the fatty

Therapeutic Dosage

How much coconut oil should one consume? According to researchers good therapeutic dosage is 3 to 4 tablespoons of VC a day. This provides enough lauric acid to build the immune system.

acids in coconut fat are lauric acid. Lauric acid has the additional beneficial function of being formed into monolaurin in the human or animal body. Monolaurin is the antiviral, antibacterial, and antiprotozoal monoglyceride used by the human or animal body to destroy lipid coated viruses such as HIV, herpes, cytomegalovirus, influenza, and various pathogenic bacteria including listeria monocytogenes and helicobacter pylori, and protozoa such as giardia lamblia. Some researchers predict that lauric acid will one day become as well known in health circles as Omega-3 fatty acid is today. It also contains Caprylic, Capric, Myristic, Palmitic and Steric acids. Virgin coconut oil has better retention of monoglycerides and other natural anti-oxidants such as vitamin A and C, which serves as natural preservatives.

Increases Disease Resistance

Regular consumption of VC greatly improves the immune system, which is the first step in prevention and treatment of diseases.

The human immunodeficiency virus (AID virus) attacks the cells of the immune system, leaving the person vulnerable to infection by any number of opportunistic organisms. Infection by these organisms eventually causes the victim's death. As yet, none of the antiviral drugs can stop it. On the other hand, 2-monolaurin (formed by the body from virgin coconut oil) dissolves the lipid envelope that protects pathogenic viruses, bacteria and

other microorganisms. However 2-monolaurin is selective in action. It will not harm the normal gut flora of the intestinal tract, though it is deadly to pathogens. VC can also cure skin cancer as proven in a study where coconut oil is applied on the skin of mice. A recent study at the Skin Care and Cancer Foundation at Pasig, Philippines evaluated novel antibacterial and antiemollient effects of virgin coconut oil in patients with a skin condition called atopic dermatitis) Several applications of virgin coconut oil stopped tumor development.

Thus regular consumption of VC will strengthen the immune system. Only a strong immune system can defeat the formation of cancer cells before they can create major damage.

Protects Heart

VC helps to reduce platelet stickiness, it stimulates metabolism, will actually promote lower cholesterol and has been shown to reduce chances of a heart attack. It has been shown to lower fat deposition, reduce the tendency to

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form blood clots, reduce free radicals in cells, lower levels of blood and liver cholesterol, raise antioxidant reserves in cells and lower the incidence of heart disease in population studies. In a study published in *Clinical Biochemistry*, virgin coconut oil had a beneficial effect in lowering total cholesterol, triglycerides, phospholipids and low-density lipoproteins (LDL). The effects were uniformly beneficial. In serum and tissues, very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL) cholesterol levels were lowered and HDL-cholesterol was increased. The polyphenol fraction of virgin coconut oil was also found to prevent in vitro LDL-oxidation. Oxidized cholesterol can initiate the process

Virgin Oil from Chinnu

Thrissur, Mathilakom based Chinnu Coconut Products is making a fortune out of coconut. Chinnamma, a housewife is running Chinnu Coconut Products with the support of her husband. Coconut Development Board gave necessary technology as well as financial and market support for this unit. Virgin Coconut Oil is the main product and Cold processing method is used for its extraction. This small-scale unit markets 500 liter of VCO in a month at Rs.200 per liter. Many companies have also come forward to buy it from Chinnu and market it under their brand name. Apart from VCO, Chinnu produce and market coconut chips and coconut vinegar.

of atherosclerosis - the fatty acids in VCO prevent this oxidation. The results in this study were interpreted due to the biologically active polyphenol components present in the oil. Nevin KG and Dr. Rajamohan T of the Department of Biochemistry, Kerala University, conducted the study.

Good for Liver

Researchers have been finding virgin coconut oil to be of great benefit to liver health. The medium chain fatty acids in Virgin Coconut Oil go straight to the liver from the digestive tract. The anti-microbial fatty acids can then clean the liver of harmful microorganisms as well as protect it from free-radical reactions. Research has shown that in the laboratory, medium chain fatty acids are effective against Hepatitis C infections. Virgin Coconut Oil will also help with cirrhosis. A few studies have shown VCO to be effective in preventing alcohol-induced cirrhosis and reverse alcohol related liver injury.

Beauty Oil

High quality of this oil makes it ideal massage oil for babies and also for skin and hair applications. This very light oil is valued for its conditioning of the skin, and can be applied directly to the skin for conditioning. It protects skin from the sun, and reloads oils necessary for soft supple skin. It helps to eliminate dandruff or other scalp problems. VCO also makes a soothing massage and body oil for dry and damaged skin.

Coconut Diet for Good Health

While some clinical studies have been conducted recently, such as the study on AIDS patients in the Philippines (1999 - 2000), much of the studies have been done on tropical populations where coconut products are a main part of the diet. One such study was done in the South Pacific islands of Pukapuka and Tokelau near New Zealand. The studies were started in the 1960s before both the islands were exposed to Western refined food. These populations ate only natural foods, and coconut foods were the most prevalent, being consumed at each meal in one form or another. While most people in western countries get 30-40 percent of their calories from fats, the people in these islands averaged between 50 and 60 percent of their calories from fat, most of that being saturated fat from coconuts. So what kind of health did these studies find among the populations in these two islands?

Bruce Fife, the world-renowned coconut expert reports in his book **The Healing Miracles of Coconut Oil**. "The overall health of both groups was extremely good compared to Western standards. There were no signs of kidney disease or hypothyroidism that might influence fat levels. There was no hypercholesterolemia (high blood cholesterol). All inhabitants were lean and healthy despite a very high saturated-fat diet. In fact, the population as a whole had ideal weight-to-height ratios as compared to the Body Mass Index figures used by nutritionists. Digestive problems are rare. Constipation is uncommon. They average two or more bowel movements a day. Atherosclerosis, heart disease, colitis, colon cancer, hemorrhoids ulcers, diverticulosis, and appendicitis are conditions with which they are generally unfamiliar."



Coconut Oil for Weight Loss

Virgin Coconut oil is used to increase body metabolism, and for weight loss. VCO also speeds up metabolism, encouraging the burning of calories. The fatty acids in VCO do not circulate in the bloodstream like other fats, but are sent directly to the liver where they are immediately converted into energy, just like carbohydrates. So the body uses the fat in VCO to produce energy, rather than storing it as body fat. Thus VCO speed up metabolism and increase thyroid activity.

Virgin coconut oil used in a study conducted in the Yucatan showed that those who used virgin coconut oil on a daily basis had a higher metabolic rate. Though they

regularly consumed considerable quantities of the saturated fat, the participants retained a lean body mass. Another facet of the Yucatan study noted that the women participants did not suffer the typical symptoms of menopause.

Many people, especially in the west suffer from chronic fatigue. The most common remedy is coffee. But caffeine consumption is often discouraged as it is addictive and may cause health problems. The better alternative is virgin coconut oil. It is not enough for one to take virgin coconut oil just when one is feeling weary and extra energy is needed. Regular intake of virgin coconut oil is required to shift ones energy into a higher gear. Unlike coffee, it is not addictive. Used by

athletes for better performance and greater endurance, VCO is often added to powdered sports drink and energy bars.

Kill Parasites

Parasites infect the intestines of both humans and animals and can cause a great deal of intestinal distress. VCO provides an effective defense against many troublesome parasites including giardia and tapeworms.

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