ABSTRACT

Coconut is one of the most valuable foods known to humankind, and the various edible products of coconut palm only enhance the importance of this remarkable tree, and it is widely distributed in the tropics. This paper gives an insight into the nutrition and health benefits derived from coconut water. The lauric acid present in coconut water has antifungal, antibacterial, and antiviral properties, which boost the body’s immune system. It improves digestion and absorption of other nutrients. The potassium and magnesium benefit blood pressure and heart functions. Above all, it contains lower calories.

Keywords: Coconut water, Antifungal, Antibacterial, Antiviral properties.

NUTRITIONAL HEALTH BENEFIT OF COCONUT (COCOS NUCIFERA) WATER

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Received: 16 February 2018, Revised and Accepted: 28 March 2018

INTRODUCTION

According to Ihekoronye and Ngoddy [1], the scientific name of coconut is Cocos nucifera. Early Spanish explorers called it Cocos, which means, “Monkey face” because the three indentations (eyes) on the hairy nut resemble the head and face of a monkey. Nucifera means nut-bearing.

Coconut water is a natural isotonic beverage - with the same level of electrolytic balance as we have in our blood. It is the fluid of life, so to speak. In fact, during the Pacific War of 1941–1945, both sides in the conflict regularly used coconut water - siphoned directly from the nut - to give emergency plasma transfusions to wounded soldiers.

Coconut water has less sodium (25 mg) compared to most sports drinks (117 mg) and most energy drink.

Coconut water contains medium chain triglycerides, which actively promote weight loss.

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Coconut water contains more potassium (at about 294 mg) than most processed baby milk.

Coconut water is naturally sterile - water permeates through the filtering husk.

Lauric acid, which is present in human mother’s milk, is also found in coconut water.

Coconut water is a universal donor - its identical to human blood plasma.

Health benefits

Indigenous people of tropical countries relied on natural plants for their medicine young coconut juice is literally a well-supplied medicine chest that comes in its own container and is used in folk healing for a number of ailments: Reliving fevers, headaches, stomach upset, diarrhea, and dysentery. The juice is also given to strengthen the heart and restores energy to the ill. Pregnant woman in the tropics eagerly drinks large quantities of coconut water.
quantities of young coconut juice because they believe it will give their babies strength and vitality.

Kabara, Ph.D, Professor Emeritus from Michigan State University writes, "Never before in the history of man is it so important to emphasize the value of lauric acid. The lauric acid present in coconut water has antifungal, antibacterial, and antiviral properties, which boost the body’s immune system. The medium chain fats in coconut oil are similar to fats in mother's milk and have similar nutritional effects because of their potent antiviral and antibacterial properties, thereby fighting against yeast fungi and other viruses such as measles, herpes simplex, and influenza.

It also improves digestion and absorption of other nutrients including vitamins, minerals, and amino acids [5].

Coconut oil
Coconut oil for health and vitality antiviral, antimicrobial, and antiobesity coconut oil has a unique role in the diet as an important physiologically functional food. The health and nutritional benefits that can be derived from consuming coconut oil have been recognized in many parts of the world for centuries. A review of the diet/heart disease literature relevant to coconut oil clearly indicates that coconut oil is at worth neutral with respect to atherogenicity of fats and oil and, in fact, is likely to be a beneficial oil for prevention and treatment of some heart disease. In addition, coconut oil provides a source of antimicrobial liquid for individuals with compromised immune systems and is a non-promoting fat with respect to chemical carcinogenesis.

Physiochemical characteristics of coconut oil

In the 1920s and 1930s, it was discovered that coconut oil differed from other fats and oils in that it was found to be composed predominantly medium chain triglycerides (MCTs). The composition of fatty acids in virgin coconut oil (VCO) as determined by gas-liquid chromatography includes saturated fats: Lauric acid, myristic acid, palmitic acid, linoleic acid, etc. VCO is colorless, free of rancidity and has specific fresh natural coconut aroma, etc. MCTs found in VCO are considered essential nutrient for infant according to Johnson and Cotter [8].

Antioxidant and antistress activity
A study carried out by Yaep et al. [7] evaluated the antistress and antioxidant effects of VCO in vivo. VCO has been reported to be rich in polyphenols and these contributed to the increased antioxidant enzyme levels, which, in turn, reduces inflammation and lipid peroxidation in VCO treated in mice. Restoration of brain antioxidant levels hinders further neuronal damage, thereby preventing subsequent monooamine depletion. The potential of VCO to prevent exercise and chronic cold restraint stress-induced damage and to restore the antioxidant balance was demonstrated, and this was attributed to the polyphenols and medium chain fatty acids present in VCO.

Anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antipyretic activities of VCO
A study conducted by Intahphuak et al. [6] evaluated the anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and antipyretic effects of VCO in rats using ethyl phenyl propiolate-induced ear edema and carrageenan and arachidonic acid-induced paw edema. VCO was found to possess moderate anti-inflammatory effects. Furthermore, there are anticancer effects on coconut oil according to Sylianco [9].

CONCLUSION
Coconut juice does not only provide a refreshing drink. It has been observed that it has a lot of health and nutritional benefits and as such should not be overlooked.

REFERENCES