



Coconut oil — It's good for you!

By Joanne Gordon, N.D., P.T.

I spend a lot of my free time reading about one of my favorite subjects, food. I love food. I can remember being in the 5th grade eating lunch across from Nancy L., who asked me, "You really like to eat, don't you?" I replied, "Yes, of course!" What I didn't realize is that it has taken me years to figure out what is actually good to eat. In my 20's, I thought Dannon yogurt was good for me, but when I look at the ingredients today, I realize that it wasn't a healthy choice. When I began to look at food labels, I realized that a big part of what I was eating was not even food.

Is this food? — A young girl came to my house eating a tube of blue gel. The ingredients were, cultured pasteurized grade A milk, sugar, high fructose corn syrup, nonfat milk, modified corn starch, kosher gelatin, tricalcium phosphate, natural and artificial flavor, Blue #1, & Red # 40. I asked her what it was. She said, "yogurt". I was astonished. I kept the label so I could share it with you.

My topic today is fat. **Are you eating enough fat?** Fats are essential to life. They make up every cell membrane, including the brain and nervous system, (The brain is 60% fat). Fats are the preferred energy source to the heart. The liver, kidney and lungs all require good fats for proper functioning, and fats are essential in the synthesis of hormones.

What kinds of fats we should eat? According to Dr. Mary Enig, an international expert on the biochemistry of food and fat, one very beneficial fat is coconut oil. She states that coconut oil, a saturated fat, holds one of the keys to our health. Fats are so important, that without them, we will become nutritionally deprived. Fats are needed to transport vitamins, and without adequate amounts in our food, fat-soluble vitamins such as Vitamin A, D, E and K will not be efficiently absorbed.

Fats come in different sizes and shapes; small, medium and long-chain and saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated. Each type of fatty acid has its own unique quality. Coconut oil is a saturated, medium-chain triglyceride. Dr. M. Schmidt, author of Smart Fats, states that coconut oil has many health benefits. Coconut oil does not contain any unhealthy trans fatty acids. Although coconut oil does not have any omega-3 fatty acids, it does have significant amounts of lauric acid which is helpful in some brain conditions and it possesses significant anti-viral activity.

Coconut oil comes from the fruit /seed of the coconut palm tree. It is exceptional oil because **it contains antiviral, antifungal, and antibacterial compounds.** 49 % of its fatty acid content comes from lauric acid. Lauric acid has antimicrobial properties and it is a precursor to monolaurin, the antimicrobial active lipid. Lauric acid is found in mother's milk and plays a critical role in infant nutrition. The other fatty acids in coconut oil are caprylic acid, capric acid, myristic acid, palmitic acid, stearic acid, oleic acid, and linoleic acid. These fatty acids give coconut oil its amazing antimicrobial properties.

According to Dr. Mercola, osteopathic physician and author, the benefits of coconut oil include:

- **Help you lose weight, or maintain your already good weight**
- **Reduce the risk of heart disease**
- **Lower your cholesterol**
- **Improve conditions in those with diabetes and chronic fatigue**
- **Improve Crohn's, IBS, and other digestive disorders**

- **Prevent other disease and routine illness with its powerful antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal agents**
- **Increase metabolism and promotes healthy thyroid function**
- **Boost your daily energy**
- **Rejuvenate your skin and prevent wrinkles**

There are many ways that you can enjoy the benefits of coconut oil. Dr. Enig recommends an adult dose of 3 – 4 TBSP per day. When I take my dose of oil, I usually melt the coconut oil, put it on a spoon, and put it in my mouth followed with food. I also recommend putting coconut oil in oatmeal, as a spread on toast, in warm tea and with cooking or baking. If you are not used to taking oil, it may be wise to start with a smaller dose.

Other ways you can increase your overall coconut content is with coconut milk, coconut cream (my husband's favorite), or the dried / fresh coconut fruit itself. The overall amount of oil is less but you will still receive the health properties from the oils present in the food.

I began taking coconut oil regularly a few months ago. I noticed an immediate improvement in my energy level. My food cravings have greatly diminished, I feel thinner, and my hair and skin looks and feels healthier. I continued its use during a recent cold/flu and I feel that I recovered even quicker because of it.

My favorite brand of coconut oil is from Tropical Traditions. They carry a certified organic virgin coconut oil that is cold-pressed without the use of chemicals or bleaches. It is unrefined and not hydrogenated. The coconut oil is made from fresh coconuts, not dried copra. You can get more information about the benefits of coconut oil at Tropical Traditions website, www.tropicaltraditions.com. You can purchase it locally at my office, Natural Health Works, in Oregon City, 503-722-7776.

Dr. Joanne Gordon is a skilled, compassionate naturopathic physician and physical therapist. She helps people by providing care and attention that goes beyond traditional medicine. Her goal is to uncover the cause of health problems and treat them, so you can feel better sooner. Her unique way of combining therapeutic herbs, homeopathic remedies, clinical nutrition and physical medicine address your health concerns naturally.

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