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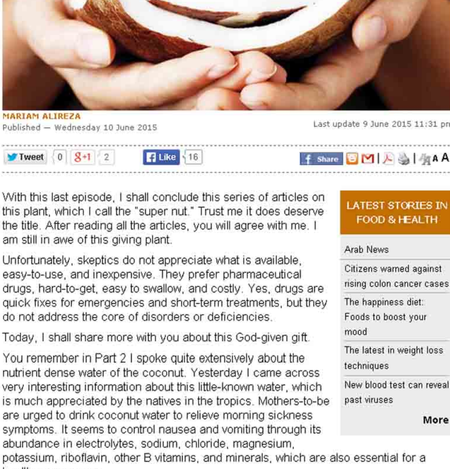
The exotic coconut: The 'super nut' (Part 10)



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With this last episode, I shall conclude this series of articles on this plant, which I call the "super nut." Trust me it does deserve the title. After reading all the articles, you will agree with me. I am still in awe of this giving plant.

Unfortunately, skeptics do not appreciate what is available, easy-to-use, and inexpensive. They prefer pharmaceutical drugs, hard-to-get, easy to swallow, and costly. Yes, drugs are quick fixes for emergencies and short-term treatments, but they do not address the core of disorders or deficiencies.

Today, I shall share more with you about this God-given gift.

You remember in Part 2 I spoke quite extensively about the nutrient dense water of the coconut. Yesterday I came across very interesting information about this little-known water, which is much appreciated by the natives in the tropics. Mothers-to-be are urged to drink coconut water to relieve morning sickness symptoms. It seems to control nausea and vomiting through its abundance in electrolytes, sodium, chloride, magnesium, potassium, riboflavin, other B vitamins, and minerals, which are also essential for a healthy pregnancy.

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Lauric acid in the water and oil is also found in mother's milk to promote the mental development and physiological growth of the new-born. Their antibacterial effects protect both mother and child from contamination and urinary tract infections (UTI) and provide hydration for both. It is probably the healthiest natural beverage. To treat UTI and destroy microbes, protect against pathogens, and eliminate toxins, coconut water should be taken twice a day. The water and oil also enhance fertility and hormone balance to make pregnancies stable, smooth, and uneventful.

Due to its dense nutrients, good fats, and water content, coconut water promotes weight and fat loss by fueling the metabolism, burning fat, and providing satiation. The "bad" cholesterol (LDL) is lowered and the "good" one (HDL) is raised to protect the heart. Along that, coconut oil synthesizes pregnenolone (P5), the precursor of many hormones like neuroactive steroids, progestens, estrogens, and others required for healthy body and brain functions. Moreover, the antioxidants in coconut oil protect the heart by preventing artery oxidation.

Drinking the water also clears the skin from acne and blemishes, plumps it, and protects it from wrinkles and signs of aging.

Lauric acid, known also as the medium chain fatty acid (MCFA), or medium chain triglycerides (MCTs), found in coconut oil gets converted in the body to a compound that is called monlaurin, which has anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-fungal, and anti-parasitic properties. Monlaurin potency heals cold sores, herpes, measles, hepatitis, food poisoning (listeria ameba), streptococcus, staphylococcus, yeast infections, giardia lambia, protozoa (parasites), and more illnesses.

Coconut oil has other beneficial characteristics. Apart from being antibacterial and antifungal, the fat has potent anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects on joint swelling, inflamed tissue, arthritis, gout, muscle ache, and back problems. By penetrating the tissues, the antioxidant (polyphenols) rich oil alleviates inflammation, pain, soreness, sport injuries, and swollen tissue.

To make your own pain relieving ointment, mix half a cup of coconut oil and two tablespoons of cayenne powder into a thick paste and wrap with a cloth. Spread the paste on the inflamed area (joints…) and leave it to act. Studies show that capsaicin in hot peppers has a powerful mitigating effect on pain and the oil on inflammation. Due to their richness in antioxidants, both act as effective cures. Pharmaceutical pain-relieving patches for back and joint pains include capsaicin to treat and reduce pain, inflammation, soreness, and swelling.

Coconut oil has been found to be an ideal medium (olive oil, too) for enhancing the absorption of lycopene and other carotenoids from vegetables as well as fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. Other healthy fatty acids also enhance nutrient digestibility.

The best coconut oil to buy should be organic, not too refined, or extra virgin. The oil sustains high temperatures due to its saturated fatty acids. Meat, chicken, and fish can be cooked with it. You can add a spoon of the oil on steamed or boiled vegetables like olive oil or butter are used. Stir-fries do well with it. It can be added to smoothies, herbal drinks, or, soups. According to Melisa Clark's article, Coconut (March 1st, 2011), users like it for its nutty, vanilla-like aroma, its rich flavor, its light texture, and its sweet and mild taste in baking and cooking.

An extract from coconut flesh offers a concentrated sweetener that is low in calories. It can substitute sugar, but in moderation. It is also healthier than sugar. Sugar should be approached with caution, as it promotes weight gain, obesity, inflammation, and metabolic syndromes.

You must be wondering if coconut oil has any side effects. Research and literature have not shown any allergies from the oil, nor do they put a limit on its consumption, but it seems that two tablespoons are sufficient on most disorders. There is no need to exceed this amount. After all coconut oil remains a fat and fat should not exceed 30 percent of the diet. Remember, more is less!

Coconut oil is extracted from the nut itself, or copra, a term used for the dried coconut in the Philippines, where the oil is extracted, refined, and exported. Copra can be smoke-dried, sun-dried, or kiln-dried or a combination of these methods. The copra-based oil is called "RBD coconut oil," which stands for refined, bleached, and deodorized. Bleaching is not chemically done with solvents like "hexane," instead through clay filters. The oil gets deodorized by steaming, which removes odor and taste. The process does not rob it from its "healthy" fats, the medium chain fatty acids (MCFA), but it does remove the antioxidants. RBD is typically done in tropical countries. Coconut oil remains solid under 25 degrees Celsius, but liquid coconut oil stays fluid even in the refrigerator. It remains liquid, because it is "fractionated coconut oil" that has had its lauric acid (the healthy fat) stripped from it. It is only good for skin care products despite its label saying "good as a dietary supplement."

Warning! Most packaged goods, pastries, candies, and bakeries are made with partially hydrogenated, hydrogenated, or hydrolyzed coconut oil, which keeps the oil solid at high temperatures. This type is harmful to the cardiovascular system and health, as it turns into trans fat in the body.

The food industry refines the oil. When it is mass-produced, it requires more refining. Certain manufacturers refine less, hence they write on labels "less refined." The least refined oils are called virgin coconut oil (VCO).

To get VCO, go to Balad, downtown Old Jeddah, to a spice and attar shop, attar. Buy whole coconuts and have the shopkeeper extract the oil using whole coconuts. This way its goodness and flavor are preserved. It cannot get better. Store the oil in glass bottles and keep in the fridge for long-term storage. Its aroma is exquisite, taste flavorful and fresh, and texture smooth. It can be taken orally; applied to lubricate the skin, condition the hair, and deodorize the body; and used in the kitchen for stir-frying, baking, and frying.

There is more about the coconut, but I decided to stop here. I shall revisit it sometime soon, Insha'Allah.

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N.B.:

Individuals with medical conditions or on medication should consult their physicians when they decide to introduce anything new in their diet even if it is natural.

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