

The exotic coconut: The 'super nut' (Part 9)



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Last week in Part 8, I discussed the important actions of virgin coconut oil (VCO) on different areas of the body and brain. I explained how studies showed its potent ketogenic effects on brain cells, which improved memory and cognitive skills in Alzheimer's disease patients and even reversed certain symptoms considerably. This is quite a breakthrough by Dr. Mary Newport who discovered the effect of coconut oil on the brain and neurons, which activated them to start responding again, hence reversing some of Alzheimer's symptoms and improving the quality of life in patients. Alzheimer's is increasing at an alarming rate in the US. It will soon become the third killer after heart disease and cancer, if its progress is not arrested.

Research also showed coconut oil's activity on cancer cells by destroying them. Another area of benefit was the digestive tract, which included stomach ulcers and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

The last point was about VCO's thermogenic effect, which fuels the burning of body fat, hence increasing the metabolic rate and promoting belly fat loss. Would you have ever thought that consuming fat makes you lose your body fat? Well, such are the benefits of "healthy" fats and they are proven by research. Now, I will continue showing how this happens.

Coconut oil has been shown in research to increase the metabolic rate, which results in weight loss and abdominal fat (visceral fat) reduction, maintaining healthy blood sugar levels. Obesity and fat around the waist are indicators and causes of internal inflammation, hence triggering diabetes type 2, a devastating disease.

Healthy fats have been shown to boost the metabolism and ignite the fat-burning process in the body, especially visceral fat around the waist, which is the most health-threatening type. Belly fat and obesity incur stress on the body, its systems, and organs, by triggering the excessive release of the stress hormone cortisol and insulin. The long-term release of the two hormones create internal inflammation, which induces metabolic syndromes like diabetes type 2, cardiovascular plaque and disorders, hypertension, heart disease, and even cancer and Alzheimer's disease.

Though considered a saturated fat, medium chain triglycerides (MCTs), two tablespoons of coconut oil were found in studies to help accelerate the loss of belly fat in both men and women within 3 months, by triggering a thermogenic effect that stimulated the metabolic rate.

But, VCO consumption needs to be accompanied by a diet free of simple sugars, refined carbohydrates, and trans fats along with moderate physical activity to give the desired results and reverse disorders. A study on women in 2009 showed that the consumption of two tablespoons, 30 milliliters, of coconut oil daily helped the subjects control their weight in three months, plus it made them shed belly fat, which is the underlying cause of inflammation, diabetes Type 2, and cardiovascular disorders. Metabolic syndromes could be reversed through weight control and fat loss.

Scientific papers documented that when animals were fed soybean and corn oils, they gained excess body fat, whereas humans consuming healthy fats such as coconut, olive, avocado, and nut oils lost body fat and excess weight and stayed healthy with a diet free of refined carbs, simple sugars, and vegetable fats that turn into "harmful" trans fats.

For athletes, who want to increase energy before competitions or have a demanding training or exercise, they are recommended to take a tablespoon or two of virgin coconut oil to boost vitality and sustenance. The oil's medium chain fatty acids (MCFA) act fast on cells by converting the fat into long-term energy. By getting absorbed in the intestinal tract and the liver, MCFA convert into effective and long-lasting energy. It is preferable and healthier than sugar, caffeine, and most of the energy drinks in the market, which have a short-term effect and are harmful to health in large amounts. Athletes find the oil enhancing to their performance and endurance during competitions and training.

According to statistics given by the American Diabetes Association (ADA), 25.8 million adults and children suffer from diabetes Type 2 in the US. This high number is worrisome, because diabetes and its side effects are devastating to health and very costly. They should also be addressed before damage occurs to organs and systems. VCO comes to the rescue here. It was found in studies to help the body handle blood glucose better by improving insulin uptake in the cells.

The good news is that diabetes is a reversible condition through weight control and belly fat loss, a nutrient dense diet, exercise, stress reduction, a little exposure to the sun, and healthy lifestyles. This can be achieved by cutting out simple sugars (sodas, desserts, cakes, ice-cream), refined carbohydrates (pasta, rice, bread...), fries, and trans fats and switching to low-sugar vegetables, legumes, some whole grain, fish, chicken, eggs, very little red meat (free-range and grass grazing cattle), sufficient amounts of healthy fats like olive, coconut, avocado, and nut oils, nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashew, pistachio...), whole seeds (flaxseeds, chia, sesame, sunflower, and pumpkin seeds), and lots of herbal infusion (olive leaf...) and spices (cinnamon, ginger...).

By adding coconut oil to your diet, your body will make ketones to replace sugar and carbohydrate needs; insulin becomes more efficient; cells and neurons get quenched, and blood sugar and weight would be under control.

Simple sugars, refined carbohydrates and "harmful" fats (trans fats, refined vegetable fats, inorganic saturated fats) lead to body fat, obesity, inflammation, and insulin resistance, which are the causes of diabetes Type 2, hypertension, cardiovascular disorder, cancer, and Alzheimer's disease.

In conditions such as hypothyroidism, the body loses some of its important functions due to hormone imbalances and oxidative stress. One of the most obvious symptoms is slow metabolic rate, which results in weight gain and obesity despite dieting (lower calories). Other signs are low body temperatures, low energy, hair loss, dry skin, lethargy and mental fogging. Due to its thermogenic (raising body temperature) properties like most "good" fats, coconut oil is able to boost the metabolic rate to promote weight loss, generate energy, raise body temperature, moisten flaky skin, improve the memory, and stop hair loss through the enhancement of the function of the thyroids.

Oral intake of coconut oil is effective on colds and flus by decreasing symptoms and incidents of bronchial infections, asthma attacks, and breathing problems. It decongests the air passages and heals nasal bleeding. It also relieves skin allergies, eczema, and psoriasis. By boosting the immune system, medium chain fatty acids (MCFA) help tissue repair and speed skin healing.

Coconut oil was also found to have antipyretic (lowering body temperature) and analgesic (relieving pain) properties on feverish conditions and produce anti-inflammatory effects on the body as mentioned earlier, hence speeding recovery.

Up to now, I tried to cover most of the benefits and effective properties of this exceptional plant and its nut, Cocos nucifera. The nut's healing and soothing water, milk, and oil on many disorders make healthy ingredients to add to recipes or to eat or drink separately. Next week, I shall end this series of articles with more information and recommend ways to choose the best coconut oil.

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