

Myth Busted: Shape Up with Good Old Fat

By RUPAMUDRA KATAKI

Whoever came up with the phrase 'a well-oiled machine' might have realised the importance of oil or fat for the smooth running of the biological machine. He or she may not have been a nutritionist, but has given the world an idea about the magnitude of the least favourite nutrient in a diet watcher's list—fat!

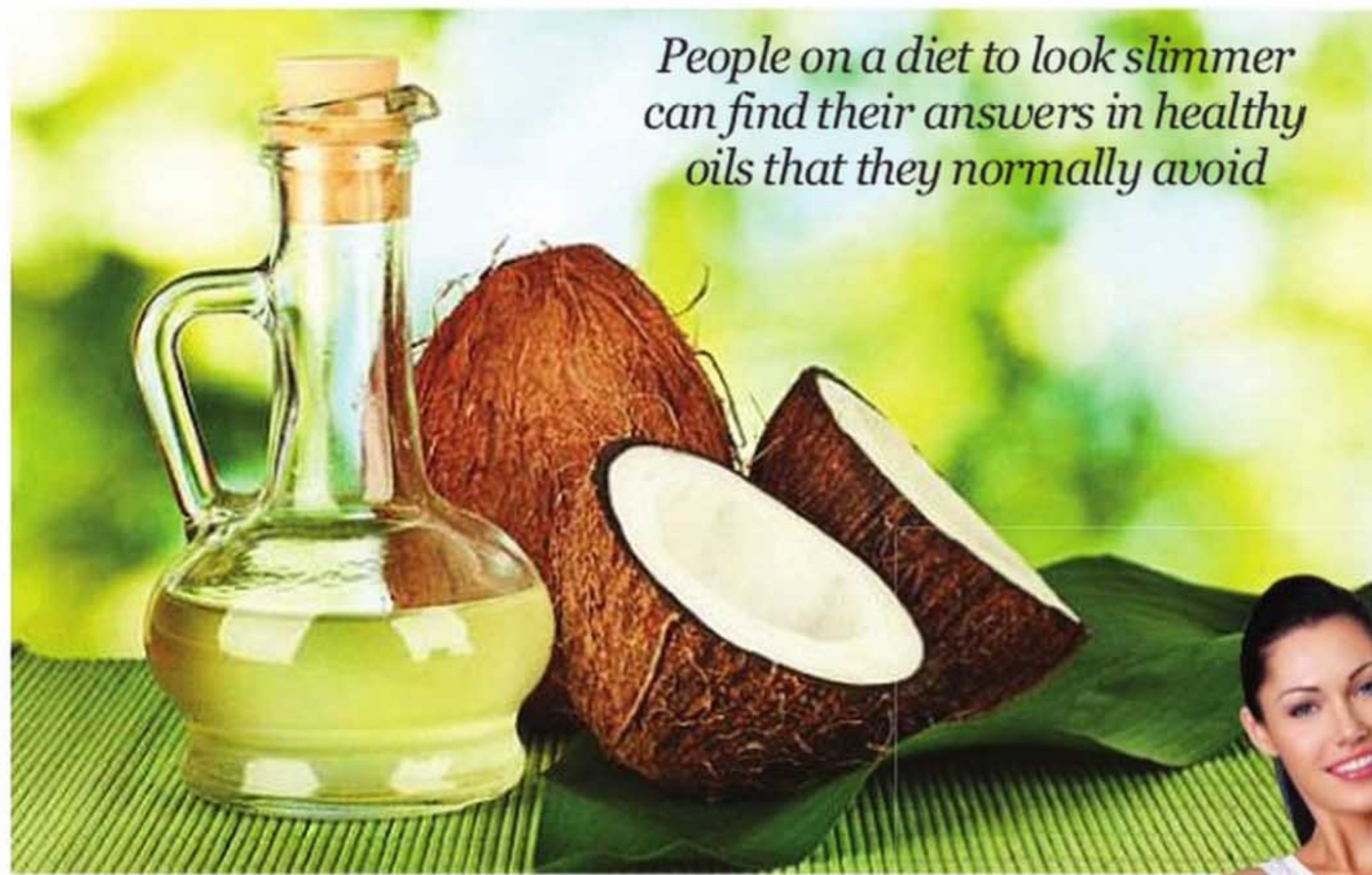
We all know about the bad effects of oil in our food. But what many of us do not know is—besides the popular belief that all fatty acids make us gain weight—these essential nutrients can be a great help if we are looking forward to shed some weight and keep our body in shape.

According to nutritionists, oil and fat need to be very judiciously included in our diet to help us keep fit and, more importantly, to maintain a healthy body mass index.

"Fatty acids derived from oils of seeds and nuts help curb the appetite to a large extent and leave a meal more palatable. So one should not go on a zero-oil diet unless medically advised," explains Aishwarya Rajan, nutritionist at NutriBenefits, a health portal.

That leaves us with one important question. Does fat help us lose flab? "Even when you are trying to lose weight, fat is still important part of your diet which cannot be eliminated completely. You should know how much and which fat to choose from. While on a weight loss diet, your body still needs 20-25g of total fat in a day," explains Lovneet Batra, clinical nutritionist of Fortis La Femme.

Low-fat foods are usually



People on a diet to look slimmer can find their answers in healthy oils that they normally avoid

high in sugar and an excess of it is stored as fat. "Healthy fat sources such as nuts and seeds also provide fibre, vitamin E, selenium, zinc which are antioxidants and boost metabolism. Dietary fat helps break down existing fat by activating fat-burning pathways through the liver," explains Batra.

According to nutritionists, a healthy weight-loss diet should have the following combination of fatty acids.

Monounsaturated fatty acids: Derived from olive oil, mustard oil, peanut oil, canola oil, almonds and walnuts.

Oleic acid or omega 9: Found in avocados, olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil and palm oil.

Omega 3: Contained in soya

NOT ALL OILS ARE BAD

- Fat provides feeling of fullness and reduce food cravings, hunger pangs and quick hunger rebound
- Fatty acids in oils like coconut oil help in reducing bad cholesterol and increase the levels of good cholesterol
- It helps in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A, K, D and E
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ean oil, walnuts, fish oils etc.

Omega 6: Sunflower oil, sesame seed oil and corn oil are a rich source of Omega 6 fatty acid.

Saturated fatty acids: Found in ghee, coconut oil, palm oil.

"It is recommended to consume the foods rich in essential fatty acids instead of supplement capsule," explains Batra. Cow milk ghee contains conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), which can help in getting rid of stubborn fat. Ghee helps in increasing high-density lipoprotein levels, which is good cholesterol. Coconut oil contains medium chain fatty acids, which can be beneficial in weight loss. However, when it comes to calories, different types of oils and fat contribute to same amount of calories which is 9Kcal/gm.

If we are on a diet to lose weight, it is best to avoid foods rich in saturated fatty acids and trans-fats such as french fries, cakes, cookies, chocolate, ice-cream, pastries, biscuits and potato chips.

As for the risk of going on a no-fat diet, what many are not aware of is that without it fat-soluble vitamins like Vitamins A, D, K and E remain unabsorbed in our body. "This in turn can lead to many health hazards, including depression and poor mental health. A diet poor in fats also does not render a heart-protective effect as it is very tough in improving one's good cholesterol (High Density Lipoprotein) without adding good sources of fats in the diet," cautions Rajan.