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Coconut confusion

Transcript:

Query- "Doctor I need your help. I love coconut products in my food, but there is conflicting information about use of coconut milk. I am a diabetic my cholesterol is incredibly good. My doctor says avoid coconut milk. What is the latest research on coconut milk"?

With so many articles being written on the benefits of using coconut in our food preparations, people get disturbed when someone writes against alleged bad effects of the coconut products for human consumption. The worst remark was made by a lady professor from Harvard, proclaiming that it is a poison.

The same story applies for eggs. A whole generation of people in the past was deprived of enjoy an egg a day, all because of misconception of the truth.

For everyday use in the kitchens, coconut milk is used to thicken and flavour the curries, and secondly used for frying foods. Other than that coconut is being heavily used in chocolates, toffees, cosmetic products like soap, shampoos, among others.

You cannot beat the taste of a good 'PolSambol' mix, to go with all Asian foods like hoppers, rice, and curry, pittus, stringhoppers and other staples.

You must be an Asian or a Pacific Islander to know the taste of foods prepared with coconut and its health benefits, and those Westerners living in Asian countries.

The Western world people will never understand this. They will condemn coconuts even with out seeing a coconut palm tree, and that is the situation.

Now let us talk about coconuts used for thickening and flavouring Asian curries.

For each curry for a family- half the contents of a full coconut flesh are scrape, then squeezed through a cheesecloth to extract the liquid as milk and added on when the curry is being simmered.

The first lot of squeezed milk is thick, and the second lot is thin.

Because this milk contains saturated fatty acids has been linked with heart disease.

Different sources of saturated fats may affect our bodies in different ways. Also, genetics play a role in how people metabolize saturated fats and the degree to which they impact on heart health.

Coconut milk though containing saturated fatty acids does not increase your cholesterol levels in your blood and has no bad effects on your heart, unlike saturated fats in other dietary sources.

- One cup of shredded coconut flesh or meat has-**Calories:** 283.
- **Protein:** 3 grams
- **Carbs:** 10 grams

- **Fat:** 27 grams
- **Sugar:** 5 grams
- **Fiber:** 7 grams
- **Manganese:** 60% of the Daily Value (DV)
- **Selenium:** 15% of the DV
- **Copper:** 44% of the DV
- **Phosphorus:** 13% of the DV
- **Potassium:** 6% of the DV
- **Iron:** 11% of the DV
- **Zinc:** 10% of the DV

In a single curry about half a cup of coconut extracted milk is used to flavour and thicken. This makes a big change to the curry, makes it rich and palatable.

The fats in coconut are medium chain triglycerides (MCTs) which are directly absorbed into the liver through the portal vein, and totally metabolised to produce energy.

Studies have shown that coconut saturated fatty acids boost the good cholesterol (HDL) and reduces the bad cholesterol (LDL)

Randomised trial of coconut oil, olive oil or butter on blood lipids and other cardiovascular risk factors in healthy men and women has revealed- from reference BMJ Open March 6th, 2018 the derived conclusions as- LDL-Cholesterol concentrations were significantly increased on butter compared with coconut oil.

Coconut oil significantly increased HDL-Cholesterol compared with butter or olive oil. Extra virgin coconut oil has recently been promoted as a healthy oil. Though high in saturated fat, the main saturated fatty acid, lauric acid, has been suggested to have different metabolic and hence health effects compared with other saturated fatty acids such as palmitic acid, predominant in butter, palm oil and animal fat. It has been suggested that coconut oil does not raise total cholesterol (TC) or low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) as much as butter.

So, there is no risk of cardiovascular disease by consuming coconut in your daily staples.

Now let us go into frying the other use of coconut oil.

Deep frying with any oil adds a lot of calories to food. The food that you cook is submerged in hot oil. The surface of the food gets cooked almost immediately and forms a seal that the oil cannot penetrate inside. Moisture inside the food turns into steam cooking the food. The steam helps to prevent oil penetrating into the food.

Both saturated oils like coconut and monounsaturated oils like olive oil are more stable when heated, and as the smoking point is high suitable for baking at high temperatures in the ovens. These two oils do not appear to change quality during deep frying.

Polyunsaturated fats like the vegetable oils are not suited for deep frying, though they are used in fish and chip outlets and restaurants, as it is the cheapest form of oil.

They use the same oil right through the day in big heating containers, and by the end of the day the free radicals emanated could be extremely high.

So, using coconut oil and olive oil are both stable oils for deep frying, and coconut being saturated makes no difference.

Coconut oil is a better choice for Asian curries. It is a stable oil. Studies have shown that even after 8 hours of deep frying at 365F to(180c) its quality remain acceptable.

Over 90% of the fatty acids in coconut oil are saturated, making it resistant to heat.

It can be re used many a times with no free radical formation unlike all other oils. So, from the health point of view and for cooking, saturated fats in coconut oil are a gift to mankind.

There are meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies evaluating the association of saturated fat with cardiovascular disease -Research done by Patty Tarino, Qi Sun, Frank B Hu, and Ronald Krauss, published online in American Journal Clin Nutrition of 13 Jan 2010 showed that there is no significant evidence for concluding that dietary saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of CHD or CVD.

Despite these findings the American Heart Association recommends limiting intake of saturated fats to 5–6% of total calories, however, various studies have concluded that saturated fats do not increase the risk of heart disease.

The only snag is that deep frying foods is linked to weight gain, especially in people with a family history of obesity.

Extra calories come from the coatings, including batter and flour, plus oil that sticks to the food after cooking.

There are more saturated fats in animal meats and dairy products. Fatty cuts of beef, pork and lamb, pastries and pies, processed meat such as sausages, burgers, bacon, and kebabs have more saturated fat than 90% saturated fats in coconut oil, still coconut oil is being condemned for use in cooking oils.

Mind your coconut oil is used in staple foods and the quantity used is so small compared to the saturated fat consumed in the above animal foods.

Coconut is a plant food and coconut oil are a healthy tropical oil. Why do the Westerners condemn coconut oil used for frying and the milk for adding to curries, when the standard American diet is high in saturated fat from meat, cheese, dairy-based desserts, such as ice cream, butter, and baked goods made with butter?

This topsy turvy situation will last until our people believe in what we say.

In conclusion, let me say -coconut is a fruit, and if doctors recommend 5 servings of fruit a day, I will ask you to include coconut, also.

Do not be fooled, use coconut meat in your curries to get that exquisite Asian taste, and forget about cholesterol levels, enjoy the tropical fruit daily in your staples.

Stay safe and goodbye for now.