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## Coconut Oil

- Coconut Oil has a unique role in the diet as an important physiologically functional food. The health and nutritional benefits that can be derived from consuming coconut oil have been recognized in many parts of the world for centuries.
- Coconut oil provides a source of antimicrobial lipids to support an individual's immune system, and is a non-promoting fat with respect to chemical carcinogenesis.
- The unique health benefits of coconut oil are directly related to its chemical structure, or more precisely, the length of its fatty acid chains.
- Coconut oil is comprised of medium-chain fatty acids (MCFAs), also called medium-chain triglycerides or MCTs.
- Coconut oil is nature's richest source of these healthy MCFAs.
- By contrast, most common vegetable or seed oils are comprised of long chain fatty acids (LCFAs), also known as long-chain triglycerides or LCTs.
- There are several reasons to explain why long-chain fatty acids are not as healthy for you as the MCFAs in coconut oil:
  - LCFAs are difficult for the body to break down – they must be packaged with lipoproteins or carrier proteins and require special enzymes for digestion.
  - LCFAs put more strain on the pancreas, the liver and the entire digestive system.
  - LCFAs are predominately stored in the body as fat (that is why most people buy into the myth that fats are automatically “fattening”).
  - LCFAs can be deposited within arteries in lipid forms such as cholesterol.
- On the other hand, however, the MCFAs in coconut oil are healthier, because:
  - MCFAs are smaller, they permeate cell membranes easily, and do not require lipoproteins or special enzymes to be utilized effectively by your body.
  - MCFAs are easily digested, thus putting less strain on your digestive system. This is especially important for those of you with digestive or metabolic concerns.
  - MCFAs sent directly to your liver, where they are immediately converted into energy rather than being stored as fat.
  - MCFAs in coconut oil can actually help stimulate your body's metabolism, leading to weight loss.
- Coconut oil has often been compared to carbohydrates in its ability to be “burned” for energy. However, since insulin is not involved in the process of digesting the MCFAs in coconut oil, people won't get those carbohydrate related spikes in your blood sugar levels.
- Several studies have shown that MCFAs enhance physical or athletic performance, and research has demonstrated that due to its metabolic effect, coconut oil increases the activity of the thyroid.
- Coconut oil contains one of the same compounds, Lauric acid, found in human breast milk. Lauric acid is predominant type of MCFA found in coconut oil. Fortunately for our health, lauric acid in both human breast milk and coconut oil transforms when consumed into a substance called monolaurin, the actual compound responsible for helping to strengthen the immune system.
- The unique composition of human breast milk fat includes the fatty acids, lauric acid and capric acid, which have potent antimicrobial properties.



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- These fatty acids offer the nursing infant protection from viruses such as herpes and HIV, protozoa such as giardia lamblia, and bacteria such as chlamydia and helicobacter.
  - A study published in 1998 in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition has shown that lactating mothers who eat coconut oil and other coconut products, have significantly increased levels of lauric acid and capric acid in their breast milk. Thus, the milk supply has increased amounts of the protective antimicrobials, which will give even greater protection to the nursing infant.
  - Pregnant females store fat to assure successful lactation. Any lauric acid and capric acid in the diet becomes part of the adipose stores. The milk fat of a lactating mother is made up of these stores as well as her current diet. If her diet does not contain lauric acid, then generally her milk fat will contain around 3% lauric acid and round 1% capric acid.
  - Outside of human breast milk, pure coconut oil is nature's most plentiful source of lauric acid.

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