

Hypothyroidism and Virgin Coconut Oil

Research shows that coconut oil may help those people who suffer from hypothyroidism and slow metabolism...

By Bruce Fife, N.D.

©2001 Reprinted with permission of the author.

[\[Why Coconut Oil Is Said To Be the Healthiest Oil on Earth \]](#)

The fatty acid chains in coconut oil, known as *medium chain fatty acids* (MCFAs) or *medium chain triglycerides* (MCTs), offer wonderful health benefits and are nowhere found more abundantly in nature outside coconut oil. For the hypothyroid sufferer the MCTs speed up the body's sluggish metabolism and promote weight loss as well.

There are many side effects of a sluggish thyroid gland and the resulting slower metabolism. First of all, it affects your energy level greatly, and with a slower metabolism and subsequent reduction in activity (and energy) there is often unwanted weight gain. Unfortunately, a person's health is affected as well. Coconut oil can help with a lot of these problems. Several health problems such as obesity, heart disease, and osteoporosis are more prevalent in those people who have slow metabolism. Any health condition is made worse if the metabolic rate is slower than normal, because the cells can't heal and repair themselves as quickly. People with hypothyroidism desperately want to live normal, energetic lives and it is quite possible adding coconut oil to your diet will be part of your answer. [Click here to find out most of the signs of thyroid dysfunction.](#)

Increase your Metabolism and Energy Level

Coconut oil or some form of it is used in many hospital formulas to help the very old, the very young, and the very ill to regain their strength and vitality. In fact, if you were given formula as a child, chances are that you given the health promoting benefits of coconut oil in every bottle. (Note: we do not promote bottle-feeding infants. Mother's breast milk is always the best nutrition for infants.) The medium chain fatty acids in coconut oil are much different than the long chain fatty acids found in the seed oils. This difference affects how the body utilizes this oil, how it is digested and metabolized, and how it aids the body.

The medium chain fatty acids in coconut oil are easily absorbed and put to use nourishing the body. Unlike other fats, they put little strain on the digestive system and provide a quick source of energy. On the other hand, long chain fatty acids are usually digested with digestive enzymes from the liver and take a long time to breakdown. Less enzymes and less energy are required for coconut oil digestion. You see, the medium chain fatty acids in coconut oil are digested and absorbed quickly and with minimal effort. Because of this there is less strain on the pancreas, liver and the digestive system. This is important for persons who suffer from metabolic problems.

Once digested long chain fatty acids go on to be stored in adipose tissue to be used later. However, coconut oil, because it contains shorter fatty acid chains, is absorbed into the blood stream and used by the body for energy. Many people describe the "burning" of coconut oil as being similar to the "burning" of carbohydrates for fuel. The long chain fatty acids, which are digested by the body, must be linked up with carrier proteins (they are called lipoproteins) and carried throughout the body. They can be used by the cells or organs for energy or stored in adipose tissue or dropped off on the sides of arteries, etc. The fats which do this are cholesterol, long chain saturated fats, monounsaturated fat, and polyunsaturated fat. The medium chain fatty acids, however, are not packaged into lipoproteins, but travel to the liver where they are converted into energy. Ordinarily they are not stored to any significant degree as body fat.

Medium chain fatty acids produce energy. Other dietary fats produce fat.

For energy, if the body uses carbohydrates, insulin, produced by the pancreas, is required for the glucose molecules to be able to enter into the cell. Many, many people develop a resistance to insulin as they get older and it becomes increasingly more difficult for the body to get these molecules into the cells. Any extra glucose which can or does not get used by the body for energy is turned into triglycerides and then carried by carriers all over the body. You can have high triglycerides in your blood and not eat an ounce of fat. Even total vegetarians can have high triglycerides from eating a high carbohydrate diet. Triglycerides and the lipoproteins, in the same manner as glucose, travel across the cell membrane to be used as energy, and they too require carriers (enzymes) in order to permeate both membranes of the cell's mitochondria where their energy is released. Since the longer chain fatty acids demand special enzymes

to pull them through the double membrane, the energy production process is much slower and taxing on the enzyme reserves. Medium chain fatty acids are unique in that they can easily permeate both membranes of the mitochondria without the need of enzymes and thus provide the cell with a quick and efficient source of energy. This is great news if you are feeling fatigued.

Eating foods containing medium chain fatty acids is like putting high octane fuel into your car. The car will run smoother and get better gas mileage. Likewise, with medium chain fatty acids, your body will perform better because it has more energy and greater **endurance**. Because MCFAs are funneled directly to the liver and converted into energy, the body gets a boost of energy. And because MCFAs are easily absorbed by the energy-producing organelles of the cells, metabolism increases. This burst of energy has a stimulating effect on the entire body. Many people, those with relatively good health, those with significant health problems, and those who are overweight notice a speeding up of their heart rate, their metabolism and their body temperature when they add coconut oil to their diet.

It is important to realize that insulin is not involved in any of the processes of getting these medium chain fatty acids into the cells and so you will not see a "sugar high" (or peak in your sugar level) and a "sugar low" where you want to go to sleep.

The fact that MCFAs digest immediately to produce energy and stimulate metabolism has led athletes to use them as a means to enhance exercise performance. There are several studies showing this to be true. For example, in one study, investigators tested the physical endurance of mice that were given MCFAs in their daily diet against those that weren't. The study extended over a six week period. The mice were subjected to a swimming endurance test every other day. They were placed in a pool of water with a constant current flow like that found in a river. The total swimming time until exhaustion was measured. While at first there was little difference between the groups of mice, those fed MCFAs quickly began to out-perform the others and continued to improve throughout the testing period.¹

To be fair, there are studies which have concluded that MCFA do not have an effect on energy levels and endurance. These studies have drawn this conclusion based on one time dosages of MCFA. The studies which are cited that show a definite benefit from the MCFA are those where the oil was given on a daily basis for a period of time. Therefore, it appears that for the best benefit a person should consume these medium chain fatty acids on a daily basis.

Besides increasing your energy level, there are other very important benefits that results from boosting your metabolic rate: it helps protect you from illness and speeds healing. When metabolism is increased, cells function at a higher rate of efficiency. They heal injuries quicker, old and diseased cells are replaced faster. Young, new cells are generated at an increased rate to replace the worn-out ones. Even the immune system functions better.

Eat Fat, Lose Weight

In the United States 55% of the population is overweight. One in 4 adults is considered obese. Being overweight increases risks for: gall bladder, disease, osteoarthritis, [diabetes](#), heart disease and early death.

You can reduce your food intake, reduce your fat intake, and you can be hungry all the time, feel miserable, depressed and not lose many (if any) pounds. Most people eventually give up with no lasting or significant weight loss. Each time you lower your calorie intake your body lowers its basal metabolism and you require less calories to go through a day, which will result in more weight gain once you give up your diet. It is a vicious cycle. Young people require more calories than older people. Physically active people use more calories than less active ones. People who are fasting, starving, or even dieting use fewer calories than people who are not. And overweight people use fewer calories than lean or muscular people. Overweight people who are dieting have even lower metabolism. And then if your thyroid gland is not working well, you may feel quite desperate. Interestingly enough, many people find, that by changing the fats they have in their diet from the unsaturated long chain fatty acids (found in seed oils) to the medium chain fatty acids (found in coconut oil), they gradually over the weeks and months lose weight effortlessly. It has also been well documented in numerous dietary studies using both animals and humans that replacing long chain fatty acids with medium chain fatty acids results in a decrease in body weight gain and a reduction in fat deposition.

The reasons seem to be two fold. Since carbohydrates are usually used for energy, if they are not in excess they will not be turned into triglycerides and go into fat stores. Proteins are rarely used for energy. They make up the building blocks of much of our cells and systems and are usually used in that function. But fats, if in long chains, will almost always go into fat stores unless the calorie intake is low and they are needed for energy. However, the medium chain fatty acids will not do that. They will help in the digestion of the fat soluble vitamins, and they will fight bacteria and viruses (Lauric acid is known for dissolving the lipid envelope that protects many pathogenic viruses and bacteria) and in the end rather than adding to fat stores these fatty acid chains will be used up for energy by the body. And since coconut oil will speed up metabolism, your body will actually be burning more calories in a day and you will have more energy. You may even become more active. This will only help to accelerate [weight loss](#) and renew your health. It is very interesting to see studies that show the unsaturated fats as having an effect on the body of causing hypothyroidism and a lower metabolic rate and the coconut oil speeding up metabolism and increasing thyroid activity.

Conclusion

The expeller-pressed seed oils (also often called "vegetable oils"), such as soybean oil, have only been added to western diets recently, mainly since World War II. Not only are these oils dominant in long chain fatty acids, but the way in which they are prepared and preserved lend to toxic *trans fatty acids* that modern research has shown is responsible for many health problems. These are fatty acids that have been altered from their original form by the refining process. Coconut oil on the other hand, is oil that has been a part of Asian diets for thousands of years, and has natural antioxidants that give it the longest shelf life of any plant oil. Traditional Asian diets have been typically free from most modern western diseases, such as obesity and heart disease.

©2001 Reprinted by permission of the author and publisher

Provided by: Debbie Starr, Founder, SKINaturals 2-Step Organic Skincare~Bringing together the healing powers of volcanic ash and coconut oil.

SKINaturals Organic