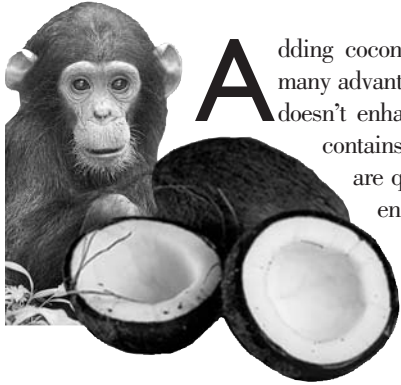


Going ape over coconuts

by Tom Mountford



Adding coconut products to your diet may have many advantages. Coconut oil is a neutral oil that doesn't enhance or suppress immunity. Coconut contains medium-chain triglycerides which are quickly absorbed and turned into fast energy, not stored as fat. In fact, the medium-chain triglycerides have a fat-burning effect. One gram of fat provides twice as many calories as either 1g of protein or carbohydrates.

Almost 50% of coconut oil is lauric acid, which is one of the principal fats in human breast milk. It protects a baby's intestines until the child's immune system is capable of protecting them on its own. Foods with lauric acid help to maintain the integrity and health of the digestive tract as well as fight and kill a range of pathogens. Lauric acid, an inactivating fatty acid, converts to monolaurin in the small intestines. This powerful yet safe anti-microbial inactivates microbes by disrupting their lipid membranes.

A small clinical trial in the Philippines compared HIV viral load responses using monolaurin or coconut oil. One group ingested one tablespoon of coconut oil three times a day. Two other groups took different dosages of a monolaurin supplement. Over 50% of the participants in the study had reduced viral load levels and one-third had a favourable increase in their CD4/CD8 ratios. Overall, the coconut oil group appeared to do as well as or better than the groups taking monolaurin.

Increasing anecdotal information indicates that people on and off HIV therapies experience significant viral load reductions when taking coconut oil. They added 3-4 tablespoons of coconut oil to

their daily diet to yield 25g of lauric acid a day. Mark Konlee of Keep Hope Alive is collecting data from individuals' experiences in order to study monolaurin further.

Recent studies on mice combined fish oils (good for lowering triglyceride levels) with natural, unrefined coconut oil. The results showed decreased levels of inflammatory cytokines, tumor necrosis factor (high levels are associated with wasting), and interleukin-6, while stimulating production of anti-inflammatory cytokines such as interleukin-10.

Coconut oil contains about 8% caprylic acid, which is a remedy for intestinal yeast infections such as candida. Caprylic acid also shows significant activity against herpes simplex, chlamydia, and HIV-1.

The daily dose of 25g of lauric acid (4 tbsp. of coconut oil) can be ingested in many ways. Coconut oil can be used on hot cereal, rice, potatoes, beans, or pasta; to sauté vegetables; mixed with peanut butter; as salad dressing with lemon juice; or in blender drinks. A cooked egg yolk helps the oil to emulsify in the blender. Coconut milk can be added to drinks and pancakes and used in baking (4oz=11g lauric acid).

One half-cup of desiccated coconut or shredded fresh coconut yields 11g and 6g of lauric acid respectively. Other good sources of lauric acid from coconut are macaroons and certain ice creams. The fat digestive enzyme lipase may increase its effectiveness. Light coconut milk contains very little lauric acid.

Warning: Do not consume coconut, fresh or dried, with Crixivan (indinavir). Dried coconut could also aggravate digestive problems. ⊕



Tom Mountford is a Treatment Counsellor with the BCPWA Society's Treatment Information Program.

ANECDOTAL INFORMATION INDICATES THAT PEOPLE ON AND OFF HIV THERAPIES EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANT VIRAL LOAD REDUCTIONS WHEN TAKING COCONUT OIL.

Getting an annual bus pass and on DBII?

If you are on Disability Benefits Level II, and you are applying for an annual bus pass, please see AIDS Vancouver access case management for assistance. AIDS Vancouver will pay \$25 toward the \$45 annual fee.

Call the AIDS Vancouver Access Office for more details at 604.893.2270.

