COCONUT – A HEALTHY FOOD

You might wonder, is a coconut truly a nut? The reality is, a coconut may be classified as a nut, a fruit, or a seed, depending on the criteria you use. In the culinary world, coconuts are generally viewed as fruits. They are known for adding a sweet, nutty — perhaps even tropical — flavor to dishes.

Coconuts grow on palm trees with the scientific name *Cocos Nucifera.* They likely originated in India and Southeast Asia. Today, coconuts grow in warm climates across the globe, such as the Caribbean and parts of Africa and South America.

Coconut meat is the edible white flesh lining the inside of a coconut, also called the "kernel." Coconut meat can be used to create coconut oil, coconut cream, coconut milk, and dried coconut. Of course, you can eat it fresh, too.

Research suggests that coconut meat provides nutritious fats and various other potential health benefits.

Nutrition Information

Coconut is generally regarded as a source of healthy fat. The meat contains protein and fiber, as well as some essential minerals such as:

- Iron
- Manganese
- Copper
- Magnesium

Two tablespoons of fresh, shredded coconut contain the following nutrients:

- 35 calories
- Less than 1 gram of protein
- 3 grams of fat
- 2 grams of carbohydrates
- 1 gram of fiber
- 1 gram of sugar

Potential Health Benefits of Coconut

Historically, people have used coconut as part of traditional medicine. The meat is said to, among other things:

- Counteract some poisons
- Protect against disease
- Ease inflammation
- Kill bacteria

Researchers have studied some, but not all, of the potential health benefits of coconut. It could:

Improve your endurance. Coconut meat contains large amounts of medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs), a type of saturated fat that is much easier for the human body to digest than animal fats. These fats, also called medium chain triglycerides (MCTs), have been demonstrated to boost the endurance of trained athletes.

Give you better oral health. The MCFAs found in coconut meat also contain antimicrobial properties. These can be useful in preventing infections related to root canals and other teeth issues. Although eating coconut meat is not a substitute for proper dental hygiene, it can help kill some of the unwanted bacteria found in your mouth and protect your gums and teeth from infection or cavities.

Help you lose weight. Regularly eating coconut meat might help with weight loss. The MCFAs widely found in coconut meat are associated with fat burning.

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Potential Risks of Coconut

Although coconut meat provides highly valuable nutrients, the food contains moderate amounts of saturated fats, so it's best to enjoy it in moderation.

Healthy Alternatives

If you're looking to avoid or cut back on saturated fats, rather than using coconut meat as a snack, choose something that's high in healthy fats, like nuts, seeds, or avocados.

SOURCE: https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-coconut