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Help Your Heart: 71% of Those Who Drank This Lowered Their Blood Pressure

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By Dr. Mercola

I have long been a fan of [coconut oil](#) as one of the most health promoting of all plant-based fats.

I have spent nearly 15 winters in Hawaii where fresh coconuts off the tree are readily available.

Coconut oil comes from the "meat" of the coconut.

But today, I'd like to share a little information about coconut oil's best friend: *coconut water*.

If you've ever picked up a fresh coconut in the grocery store and shaken it, you've heard the liquid sloshing inside—this is coconut water.

Both coconut water and coconut milk come from coconuts, but they are not the same thing.

Coconut Milk Versus Coconut Water

Coconut milk, known in Malaysia and Indonesia as "santan" and as "gata" in the Philippines, is a thick liquid made by grinding up coconut meat and then diluting it with plain water. Coconut milk is a rich source of healthy fat, protein, and energy and is often used in cooking, especially in Asian cuisine.

Coconut milk is comprised of about 50 percent fat/protein and 50 percent water, and this is what you commonly see in cans in the Asian section of your grocery store.

Coconut water, on the other hand, is a clear, light, refreshing liquid (95 percent water) extracted from young, green coconuts that have not reached maturity. These look much different than the brown hairy ones you commonly see in the produce section—they are white, smooth, and pointed on one end, flat on the other.



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When you can find them, young coconuts will be in the refrigerated produce section because they are perishable.

Coconut water is the liquid part of the endosperm (kernel) of the coconut fruit. When coconuts are immature, the endosperm is semisolid and jelly-like. As the coconut matures, the endosperm becomes more solid and fibrous, developing into the firmer coconut meat with which you are familiar. As the coconut matures, the water inside is replaced by more coconut "meat" and air, so it's best to harvest the water when the coconut is young.

It turns out that BOTH the "meat" and the liquid of coconuts are nutritional powerhouses!

"Dew from the Heavens"

Hawaiians call coconut water "noelani," which means "dew from the heavens." Many tropical cultures prize coconut water above all other beverages due to its rehydrating and health renewing properties. Not only is coconut water good for you, it's good for plants too, having been traditionally used as a growth supplement in plant propagation. As a result of the rich volcanic soils and mineral-rich seawater in which coconut palms grow, coconut water's nutritional profile is very impressive.

Coconut water is:

- Rich in natural vitamins (especially the B vitamins), minerals, and trace elements (including zinc, selenium, iodine, [sulfur](#), and manganese). Vitamins are necessary for the enzymatic reactions your cells need in order to function.
- Full of amino acids, organic acids, enzymes, [antioxidants](#), and phytonutrients.
- Rich source of electrolytes and natural salts, especially potassium and magnesium.
- Light, low calorie and nearly fat-free, as well as low in [sugar](#) but pleasantly sweet—contains about a fifth of the sugar of other fruit juices, like apple or grape juice, as well as containing a little fiber to moderate absorption.
- Rich in cytokinins, or plant hormones, which have anti-aging, anti-cancer, and anti-thrombolytic effects in humans.

Coconut water also has an [alkalizing effect on your body](#), which can help correct the cumulative effects of acidifying foods that make up most diets today. For a complete nutritional profile, refer to the [tables at the Coconut Research Center site](#). (<http://www.coconutresearchcenter.org/nutrition-2.pdf>) The list of health benefits of coconut water is impressive, and growing by leaps and bounds with each new scientific study.



Coconut Water's Abundance of Health Benefits

Addressing every one of these areas is beyond the scope of one article, but I would like to touch on a few of the most impressive areas where coconut water may give your health a boost. According to Bruce Fife, author of [Coconut Water for Health and Healing](#) and one of the leading coconut experts, scientific research and clinical observation have shown coconut water to have the following broad-spanning health benefits:

Rehydration (water and electrolytes)	Increased exercise performance	Cardioprotective (rich in potassium and magnesium); helps regulate blood pressure, improve circulation, reduces plaque formation
Anti-inflammatory; reduces swelling in hands and feet	Prevents abnormal blood clotting	Aids in kidney function (preventing and dissolving kidney stones, UTI remedy)
Helps balance blood glucose and insulin levels	Digestive tonic (rich in enzymes); feeds friendly gut flora	Remedy for constipation and diarrhea
Anti-aging properties	Enhances skin health (elasticity, age spots, wrinkles), improves wound healing	Enhances eye health (cataracts, glaucoma)
Supports good immune function; antimicrobial (contains monolaurin)	Helps prevent osteoporosis	Anti-cancer properties



Perfect Electrolyte Balance from Mother Nature

[Electrolytes](#) are inorganic compounds that become ions in solution and have the capacity to conduct electricity. They are important for electrical signaling—and of course your brain, heart,

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muscles and nervous system are all bioelectrical systems. Your cells use electrolytes to maintain voltage across their membranes and carry electrical impulses to other cells.

Things like water balance and blood pH depend on your body's proper electrolyte balance, and you can suffer severe medical problems if your electrolytes fall out of balance.

Fresh coconut water is one of the richest natural sources of electrolytes and can be used to prevent dehydration from strenuous exercise, vomiting, or diarrhea. You lose electrolytes (especially sodium and potassium) when you sweat, which must be replenished with food and water intake. Because coconut water naturally contains so many electrolytes, it's been called "Nature's Gatorade."

Coconut water has five electrolytes your body needs:

1. [Potassium](#): The most important positive ion (cation) *inside* your cells; potassium regulates heartbeat and muscle function; coconut water contains 295 mg, which is *15 times* the amount in the average sports drink
2. [Sodium](#): The most important positive ion in fluid *outside* your cells, and also the one most depleted with exercise, as you lose sodium through sweat and urine
3. [Magnesium](#): important for maintaining the electrical potential of your cells, proper muscle function, and preventing calcium overload
4. Phosphorous: Plays important roles in bone health, but also in transferring energy throughout your body, helping your muscles contract, and regulating nerve function (partners with calcium)
5. [Calcium](#): Important for bone health (partners with phosphorous)



The ONLY "Sports Drink" I Recommend

For most average exercisers and athletes, [sports drinks are not only a waste of your money, but more importantly, can actually worsen the health of most who use them.](#) Less than one percent of those who use sports drinks actually benefit from them. Most sports drinks are loaded with things you DON'T want, like refined sugars, artificial colors and chemicals, none of which are in natural coconut water.

If you exercise for 30 minutes a day at a moderate to high intensity, [fresh, pure water is the best thing to help you stay hydrated.](#) It's only when you've been exercising for longer periods, such as for more than 60 minutes, or in the heat, or at extreme intensity levels, where you are sweating profusely, that you may need something more than water to replenish your body.

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Besides plain water, coconut water is one of the best and safest option to rehydrate yourself after a strenuous workout. If you need the electrolytes, it will provide them. If you don't need them, then it certainly won't hurt you. And as you're learning, coconut water has a mountain of other health benefits in addition to rehydration, which no commercial sports drink in the world can provide. Depending on how much salt you've lost through sweating, you might even add a tiny pinch of [natural Himalayan salt](#) to your glass of coconut water.

[One study in 2007](#) found sodium-enriched coconut water to be as effective as commercial sports drinks for whole body rehydration after exercise, with less stomach upset.

Coconut water is sterile when it comes out of the coconut, and extremely similar in composition to human blood plasma. These unique properties make it so completely compatible with the human body that it [can be infused intravenously into your bloodstream](#). Physicians have actually used coconut water successfully as an IV fluid for more than 60 years, especially in remote regions of the world where medical supplies are limited and it has saved many lives. You can appreciate how safe and beneficial this natural beverage is, if it can be used intravenously!

Cytokinins: Secret Fountain of Youth Revealed!

Possibly the most important nutritional constituent in coconut water—more beneficial than the electrolytes vitamins and minerals and amino acids—is something you've likely never even heard of: *cytokinins*.



[Cytokinins](#) are phytohormones, or plant hormones. These hormones regulate the growth, development, and aging of a plant. Coconut water has been an important horticultural resource, used in the propagation of several plants, including orchids and traditional Chinese medicinal herbs. The cytokinins found in coconut water support cell division, and thus promote rapid growth.

But what does this have to do with humans?

Cytokinins have actually been found to exert an [anti-aging effect on human cells and tissues](#). When human cells are exposed to cytokinins, aging slows down considerably. Cells treated with cytokinins don't undergo the normal degenerative changes, so they don't "act their age." Researchers have suggested that if you consume a diet rich in cytokinins, you may experience anti-aging effects and have less risk for degenerative and age-related diseases. And coconut water is the richest natural dietary source of cytokinins.

Cytokinins have also been found to have anti-thrombolytic properties so may lower your risk for blood clots. But coconut's heart benefits don't stop there. They have also been shown to [have anti-cancer effects](#).

[According to Bruce Fife:](#)

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"In regulating cell growth, cytokinins prevent the mistakes that may lead to the development of cancer. Normal cells are kept healthy while cancerous cells are programmed to die, preventing them from growing and spreading. Subsequently, the anti-cancer effects of cytokinins have been well documented."

Benefits for Your Heart and Urinary Tract

High levels of mineral ions, especially potassium, in coconut water have been found to [help prevent heart attacks](#). And coconut water has been found to have blood pressure benefits. In [one study](#), 71 percent of people who drank coconut water experienced lower blood pressures.

Similar benefits have been found if you have problems with urinary stones. Dr. Eugenio Macalalag, director of the urology department of the Chinese General Hospital in the Philippines, reported that [coconut water was effective in treating his patient's kidney and urethral stones](#). He reported that his patients who drank coconut water two to three times a week experienced a significant reduction in stone size and expulsion, eliminating their need for surgery.

Pesticide, Chemical and Environmental Considerations

The most common variety of coconut being grown today for harvesting coconut water is a high-water yield dwarf hybrid variety that CAN be heavily fertilized and sprayed with [pesticides](#). This makes it very important for you to select *organic* coconut water and *organic* fresh coconuts.



It is important to make sure the coconuts and coconut products you purchase are certified organic and sustainably raised. Regular coconut palms grow to be 80 to 100 feet tall, and because workers have to climb up and pick the coconuts, more manageable dwarf varieties have been cultivated that average about nine feet tall. There are environmental concerns as well, related to the intense market demand for coconuts and their products.

[According to Josefina Staats, the founder of KULAU Coconut Water:](#)

"Coconut palms are often cultivated in industrial-style monocultures geared towards efficiency. But plantation economies with the sole focus of maximizing their yield often severely damage fragile ecosystems. There are a few (who profit), but many others are left to deal with the ecological consequences."

SO Much More Than a Sports Drink

Coconut water is one of Nature's perfect foods—it is hard to say enough good things about it. It's the perfect replacement for juice or soda. Please remember to read the label, to make sure it's as pure and unprocessed as possible. Of course, drinking it fresh from the coconut, as opposed to bottled, is the ultimate choice.

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I'd like to close with a quote from Jean Yong (et al), who published a [comprehensive review](#) of the potential impact on human health of this amazing natural elixir:

"The recent discovery of other medicinal values of coconut water signifies a good potential in improving human health. Better insights and understanding of the functions and properties of the individual components of coconut water will, therefore, help us to better utilize this marvelous and multidimensional liquid with special biological properties from nature."

So next time you're searching for a cool, refreshing after-workout beverage, crack open a coconut and experience its rejuvenation for yourself!

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