## Association of Coconut Fat Intake and Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors of Healthy Adults

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Coconut fat (CF), which is rich in saturated fatty acids (SFA), is the major source of fat in the Sri Lankan diet. The association between CF and cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors is debatable. This cross-sectional study was conducted to determine the association between CF intake and CVD risk of healthy adults living in a coconut growing area. Randomly selected 303 healthy adults, aged 25-55 years were the participants. A range of biological and anthropometric risk markers of CVD and dietary intakes were determined. Mean CF intake of the subjects was 37.6  $\pm$  18.9 g/d (58.9% of the total fat consumption). Subjects who consumed  $\leq 16\%$  energy from CF (low CF) and > 16% energy from CF (high CF) were compared for a range of risk factors. Subjects in the high CF group had significantly higher HDL-Cholesterol (HDL-C) levels, lower total cholesterol: HDL-C and waist: height ratio (WhtR) compared to subjects in low CF group. The subjects that consumed a high amount of CF were less likely to have a low HDL-C (Odds Ratio: OR=0.39, CI= 0.22-0.66) compared to the group that consumed a low amount of CF. In females, percentage SFA from CF and percentage energy from CF were significant predictors of HDL-C ( $\beta = 0.16$ , P = 0.03) and WhtR ( $\beta = -0.02$ , P = 0.001), respectively. CF did not show any unfavorable association with any of the risk markers investigated. In conclusion, this study indicates that CF intake has cardio-protective type of associations by decreasing the prevalence of low HDL-C.

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