Nowadays, consumers prefer vegetable foods with great nutritional value and include more vegetable oils in the diet, which favors the consumption of coconut oil.

The popularity of coconut oil grows everyday, due to its potential health benefits, such as: decreased appetite, helps in the elimination of abdominal fat, prevention of cardiovascular diseases, among others (1).

Aim

This oil has become quite attractive to the population and, for this reason, this work aims to:

- review the current knowledge about the nutritional properties;
- health effects;
- and applications of coconut oil in foods.

Coconut Structure

Coconut oil is produced from the ripe fruits of the coconut palm Cocos nucifera L. (3).

The coconut seed is found inside the fruit that is formed by the integument and the solid and liquid endosperm. Coconut oil is extracted from the seed coat and the solid endosperm or dried desiccated coconuts, known as copra (4).

CONCLUSIONS

Coconut oil contains more than 90% saturated fatty acids, making it a saturated fat that must follow the recommendations for incorporation into the daily diet (<10% of total calories). However, about 60% of its composition consists of medium chain fatty acids.

Reports indicate that coconut oil has health benefits such as reducing total cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL, in addition to increasing HDL, helping to eliminate abdominal fat, strengthening the immune system and others.

Not all saturated fatty acids have the same effects on liver cholesterol. In terms of metabolism, lauric acid behaves more like a long-chain fatty acid, because 70-75% is absorbed via chylomicrons. In comparison with medium chain fatty acids, about 95% are absorbed directly via the hepatic portal vein.

REFERENCES