Abstract

Title: Coconut water as a rehydration fluid.
- Can coconut water be recommended as a better choice than water or sports drink after moderately intense training?

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Program: Dietician study program, 180/240 ECTS
Type of paper: Examination paper, 15 hp
Date: May 26th, 2014

Background: Already in the 1960s an alternative to water as a rehydration fluid occurred, the so-called sports drink. Coconut water has in recent years been claimed as the “natural sports drink” in media. Coconut water is sold in shops and fitness centers around the world and has established itself as an alternative to water and sports drink in terms of rehydration after a workout.

Objective: To investigate whether there is scientific evidence to recommend coconut water as a rehydration drink after moderately intense exercise ahead of water or sports drink.

Search strategy: The search for articles in this systematic review was performed in the databases PubMed, Scopus, Cochrane and GUPEA. Keywords used were “coconut water”, “rehydration” and “exercise”.

Selection criteria: This systematic review includes studies where rehydration effects after moderately intense exercise were compared between coconut water, water and sports drink. The studies included were human studies on healthy adult subjects and were written in Swedish or English. In addition, they had to be available free of charge.

Data collection and analysis: The selected articles were examined for quality with the aid of a template from Swedish SBU. The evidences for each outcome were then summarized using a form provided by the University of Gothenburg.

Main results: Three articles were consistent with the selection criteria and form the basis for this review. The subjects lost 2-3 % of their body weight through exercise. This was replaced with rehydration fluid equivalent to 120 % of the lost weight during the rehydration period that followed. One study found that coconut water and sports drinks had significantly better rehydration effect compared to water. Ingestion of coconut water caused greater stomach upsets according to one study when compared to water or sports drink.

Conclusions: There is low scientific evidence to recommend coconut water ahead of water or sports drink as a rehydration drink after moderately intense exercise. More scientific research needs to be performed to ensure any possible evidence.