ABSTRACT

Coconut has been a major source of fat in the habitual Sri Lankan diet. Coconut scrapings, milk and oil are consumed by majority of Sri Lankans and they get significant amount of energy from coconut. Nevertheless, there has been a controversy that coconut fat in the diet contributes to the high prevalence of coronary risk factors in Sri Lanka. Therefore, present study was carried out to estimate the dietary coconut fat intake and the prevalence of selected coronary risk factors among apparently healthy adults. Seventy apparently healthy adults (37 males & 33 females) aged 25 - 55 years were selected by systematic random sampling from Dandagamuwa G.S. division in Kuliyapitiya Divisional Secretariat, which belongs to Kurunegala district. Intake of nutrients and coconut fat by the selected subjects were examined using 24-hr dietary recall and recipe survey. The frequency of coconut consumption was examined using a food frequency questionnaire. A questionnaire was used to assess the socioeconomic and life-style characters of the subjects. Body mass index, waist circumference, waist: hip ratio, waist-to-height ratio and blood pressure were assessed to determine the prevalence of CHD risk factors.

Results showed that, the dietary fat contributed 21% of total energy in the study population and 76% of this fat was from coconut. The daily mean (±SD) consumption of coconut fat was about 38.8g (±13.8) per person and it comprised 16% of the total energy intake. Saturated fat in coconuts contributed about 14% of total energy. Out of the study population 27% were obese, 14% were hypertensive, 44% showed central obesity. Undesirable waist circumference and waist: hip ratio was found among 19% and 14% of the subjects respectively. About 11% of the subjects were smokers and 37% were physically inactive. Coronary risk factors were common among apparently healthy adults especially among those who had low coconut fat diet than high coconut fat consumers. There was no significant difference in the levels of risk factors between high and low coconut fat intake groups.

Key words - Apparently healthy adults, coconut fat, CHD risk factors, high coconut fat diet, low coconut fat diet.