



The Numerous Uses of Palm Oil



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Introduction

Palm oil (*Elaeis guineensis*) is an edible plant oil derived from the fruits of palm trees Poku [1]. It is extracted from the outer fleshy mesocarp pulp of the fruit of oil palm Chandrasekharan et al., [2]. Palm oil is naturally reddish in colour because it contains a high amount of beta-carotene Imoisi [3]. The oil palm is a monocotyledon belonging to the genus *Elaeis*. It is a perennial plant and has been reported to have the highest production per hectare among oil crops (Sundram et al., 2003 & Rui Li et al 2012). Palm oil is mostly utilized for human consumption, it is often processed as it contains numerous nutrients essential for health. As a result of the high affinity of atmospheric oxygen by oil, most oil and fats become rancid, that is giving off an offensive odour and sour taste due to the decomposition of fats and oil into free fatty acid. Palm oil has been reported to contain numerous chemical components, as it is rich in palmitic acid, β -carotene, vitamin E, oleic acid, polyunsaturated fatty acids together with high concentration of vitamin A that is carotenes Ogan et al., [4]. The red colour of palm oil is due to the high levels of carotenes and vitamin E when it is not highly processed or bleached. Vitamin A is also an essential component of palm oil. It is very useful for essential and proper night vision, healthy skin and the regulation of cell structure, metabolism and growth.

In addition, vitamin A enhances the body's immunity and increases the body's resistance to infections. Another important component of palm oil is vitamin E. This vitamin is reported to promote cellular utilization and strengthening of the blood vessels, muscles and nerve fibers as well as enhance youthfulness and

longevity Ogan et al., [4]. Vitamin E also promotes reproductive health in both males and females. Palm oil when taken in its natural state is one of the best ways of supporting the body with provitamins. For pregnant and lactating women, natural palm oil has been recommended in their daily diet as a means of increasing their vitamin A levels and also the levels of carotenoids in breast milk Imoisi [3]. Red palm oil is reported to promote optimal brain development of the unborn fetus and also prevent all kinds of infections. In traditional medicine practice, palm oil has been implicated to counteract the effect of any kind of poison. They are also known to soften dry and chesty cough. In cases of respiratory challenges such as asthma, palm oil has been reported to serve as a form of first aid to relieve asthma when taken in addition with some leaves. Palm oil is also utilized as a poultice to help mature boil draw out pus or other impurities.

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