



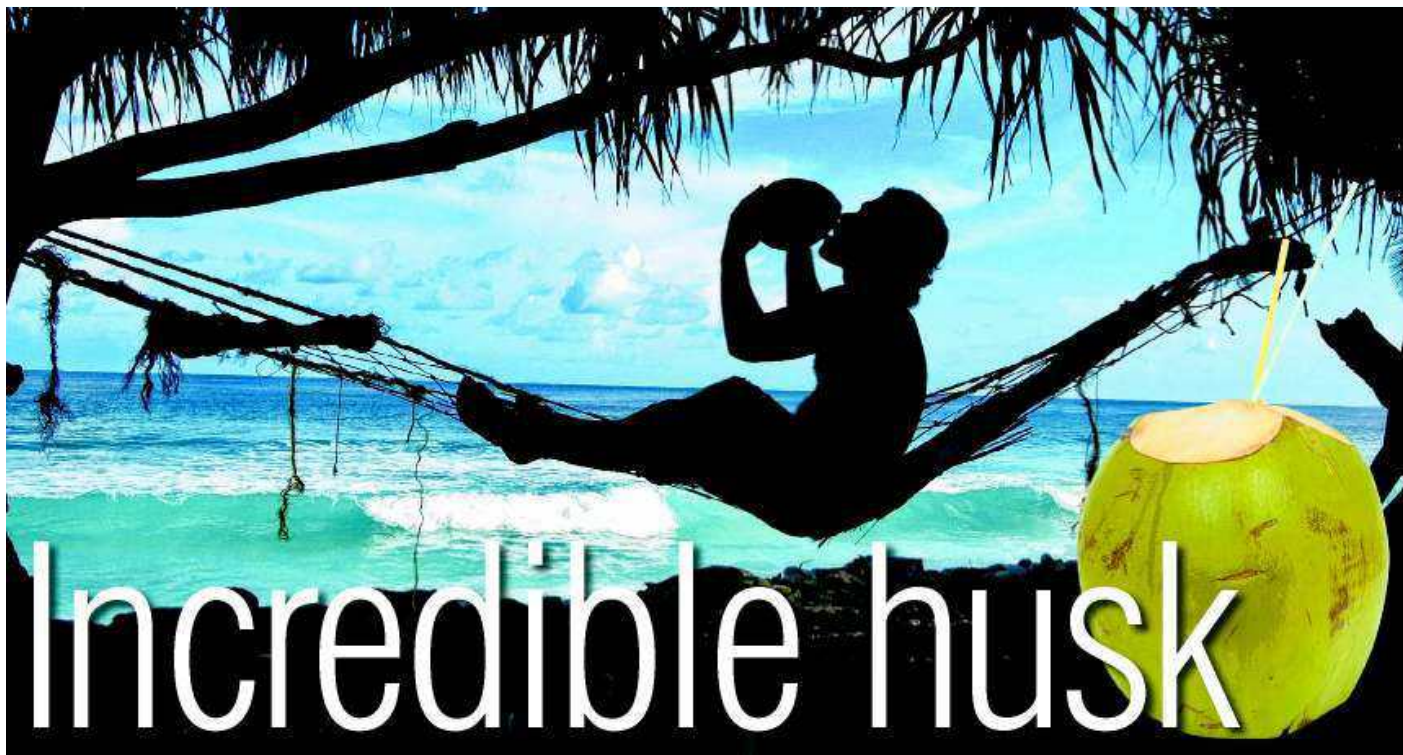
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## We're going crazy for coconut water but is it all it's cracked up to be? **BRIDGET KEHOE** finds out

Rihanna and Madonna share a lot of things – a love of high-cut leotards, angular bras and a taste for the fad tippie of the year, coconut water.

The web is also abuzz with alternative medicine bloggers proclaiming the benefits of this "miracle drink".

If you believe everything you read online, coconut water can cure acne, reduce the risk of developing cancer, and is good for general wellbeing.

But what exactly is it, and can it live up to any of these claims?

In its purest form, it's the liquid in young, green coconuts and is drunk straight from the fruit in many parts of Asia and the Pacific.

In most western countries it was limited to health food stores until recently.

But the humble drink became liquid ka-ching when Coca-Cola and Pepsi spied the potential.

They started processing and bottling the juice for commercial sale, which meant marketing and celebrity endorsements (Madonna threw quite a bit of her own cash behind a certain brand, so it's in her interests to be seen sipping the stuff).

It's been hailed as a great hydrator

full of vitamins and minerals.

But Nutrition Australia senior nutritionist Aloysa Hourigan says while coconut water is a good source of potassium, there are no substantial vitamins in coconut water.

Naturopath Emma Sutherland agrees.

"You wouldn't be drinking coconut water for vitamin content," she says.

As for claims it can help with acne or protect from cancer, Hourigan says there is very little evidence to support these health claims.

"These claims are fairly overrated," she says.

"Some people expect coconut water to be a cure-all and it isn't."

### EXERCISE RESTRAINT

One area coconut water does excel at is as a hydrator.

"It is good for rehydration post-exercise," Sutherland says.

"I would recommend drinking coconut water over a commercial sports drink as it has less sugar and salt, and more potassium."

But Hourigan says that referring to coconut water as "nature's sports drink" is a problem because most

people actually don't need a sports drink.

"Sports drinks are something that you only need if you are doing very intense and strenuous exercise for over an hour," she says.

Hourigan also says it does not match the content of sports drinks, which have been designed specifically for the body's needs.

"Coconut water has more potassium and less sodium than sports drinks, so it is not the same as drinking a sports drink because you actually lose more sodium when you exercise.

"So if you need a sports drink because you are an athlete then, in this case, the higher salt content is a good thing."

But one thing the health experts agree on – coconut water is much healthier than cola soft drinks or energy drinks such as Red Bull.

For those of us who aren't athletes or pop stars dancing on the stage for hour after hour, what should we drink?

Hourigan says plain water is the best way to rehydrate yourself – and the damage to your wallet is minimal.