

THE POWER OF CURCUMIN

SUPPLEMENT HOLDS PROMISE FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH

THE SPICE THAT ADDS A PUNGENT ZING AND SAFFRON COLOR TO CURRY DISHES? IT BRINGS A LOT TO THE TABLE IN TERMS OF HEALTH BENEFITS AS WELL. TURMERIC HAS LONG BEEN VALUED IN ASIA FOR ITS MEDICINAL PROPERTIES. ITS ACTIVE INGREDIENT, CURCUMIN, IS A POTENT ANTI-INFLAMMATORY AND ANTIOXIDANT THAT HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH, WHICH HAS SHOWN PROMISING EFFECTS FOR A WIDE RANGE OF HEALTH ISSUES.

“Research to date suggests that chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, and most chronic diseases are closely linked, and the antioxidant properties of curcumin can play a key role in the prevention and treatment of chronic inflammation diseases,” notes a recent meta-study by scientists in China and the United States.

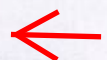
Some of curcumin's benefits can be harvested by incorporating turmeric into your diet. About ½ to 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder with food has certain digestive and cognitive benefits. Curcumin is also available in supplement form. A dosage of 400 to 600 milligrams (mg), three times a day, is typically recommended for adults.

One of the challenges of curcumin is its limited bioavailability—the extent to which it can be used by the body. Some supplement formulas now include piperine, a pepper extract, which enhances the nutrient's bioavailability. Other supplements use different ingredients to enhance absorption.

“The only form that I will use is the one called BCM-95, which increases absorption approximately 700 percent by adding in turmerone oils. I use 500 milligrams twice a day for treating depression or 750 to 1,500 milligrams twice a day for those with cancer,” says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD.

Consult your healthcare practitioner before supplementing with curcumin, especially if you have gallstones or are taking blood thinners, diabetes medications, or drugs that reduce stomach acid. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should avoid curcumin supplements (though it's fine to eat turmeric in food). Stop taking curcumin two weeks before surgery, as it can thin the blood.

Here's a rundown of some of the conditions that curcumin has shown promise in alleviating.



Curcumin v. Cancer

Human and animal trials indicate that curcumin, on its own or in combination with other agents, has potential as a therapy or as a preventive for bladder, brain, breast, colorectal, liver, lung, oral, ovarian, pancreatic, prostate, renal, and uterine cancers, head and neck squamous cell carcinoma, leukemia, multiple myeloma, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

"Curcumin is currently used both for cancer prevention and its treatment," explains Ajay Goel, PhD, director of Epigenetics, Cancer Prevention, and Cancer Genomics at the Gastrointestinal Cancer Research Lab at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. "In the prevention setting, curcumin has been used for virtually all types of human cancers with very promising and successful findings. In the context of treatment, the majority of research is aimed at using curcumin as an adjunctive treatment together with chemotherapeutic treatments. In many of these studies, curcumin has been able to reduce the dose of chemotherapy, and as a result, toxicity associated with conventional chemotherapeutic drugs."

IBD & IBS

The anti-inflammatory properties of curcumin may also be effective in treating Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and other forms of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which is characterized by inflammation of the intestines.

One study of patients with ulcerative colitis found that those who took curcumin were significantly less likely to have a recurrence than those who took a placebo. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), too, may be a good candidate for treatment with curcumin. In one study, patients given turmeric extract tablets saw a notable decrease in symptoms.

Joint Pain

Curcumin has been studied as a treatment for arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and joint pain, with promising results. A 2009 study showed that turmeric extract worked as well as a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug for osteoarthritis of the knee.

Neurological Diseases

Researchers are enthusiastic about curcumin's potential as a treatment for neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's. Laboratory and animal studies indicate that a compound in turmeric can encourage the proliferation of brain cells. Further research is needed before it is clear whether similar results can be achieved in humans. If it is possible, these turmeric compounds may be able to help repair the brain, benefitting people with Alzheimer's disease.

Cardiovascular Diseases

There's a strong correlation between inflammation markers and heart and other cardiovascular diseases, and considerable evidence that curcumin works against vascular diseases in a number of ways.

Other Conditions

Also showing promise for curcumin therapy: allergies, asthma, and bronchitis; kidney diseases; metabolic diseases including diabetes; obesity; and skin diseases including scleroderma and psoriasis. ■■■■

SELECTED SOURCES "Brain Repair 'May Be Boosted by Curry Spice'" by Smitha Mundasad, www.BBC.com, 9/26/14 ■ "Curcumin, Inflammation, and Chronic Diseases: How Are They Linked?" by Y. He et al., *Molecules*, 5/20/15 ■ Personal communication: Jacob Teitelbaum; Ajay Goel, 12/15 ■ "Therapeutic Roles of Curcumin: Lessons Learned from Clinical Trials" by S.C. Gupta et al., *AAPS Journal*, 1/13 ■ "Turmeric," University of Maryland Medical Center, www.ummm.edu ■ "Turmeric (Curcumin)," Vitamins and Supplements Lifestyle Guide, www.WebMD.com, 5/1/15