



From our friends at Back to Herbs

### News You Can Use

## Turmeric - A Super Spice

**Ayurvedic Medicine is the oldest organized healing modality in use today. It dates back about 5,000 years.** One of the foundations of Ayurveda practice is “food as medicine” and one of the food staples in India is curry. In India, Alzheimer’s disease is uncommon (1% -2.4%), especially in comparison to the numbers of those with Alzheimer’s disease in the U.S (5% -17%). It is estimated that some 10 percent of people over the age of 65 in the United States suffer from Alzheimer’s disease; the numbers escalate to 50 percent among those 85 or older. As people live much longer than they used to, the incidence of AD is likely to mount even higher. The amazing disparity between these numbers piqued research into why it could be so vastly different and the answer that came up was the use of a spice called turmeric, which is a common ingredient in curried food.



**Curcumin is a plant compound in turmeric that gives curries its bright yellow color.** More than 1300 studies on turmeric and its health benefits have shown that the body uses the curcumin in turmeric to get rid of cancer-causing toxins. Turmeric also blocks estrogen receptors and enzymes that promote cancer. And it’s been found to stop the growth of new blood vessels in cancerous tumors - an important factor in keeping cancer from getting larger and spreading throughout the body. But one of turmeric’s most profound health benefits is its ability to reduce, prevent, and stop inflammation. While inflammation is a normal and needed response to injury or disease, chronic inflammation can cause damage to tissues. And researchers are now finding inflammation plays a huge role in Alzheimer’s disease.

Plaques and tangles are the hallmarks of Alzheimer’s disease. But researchers looking at the brain damage caused by Alzheimer’s have always noted the presence of inflammation wherever plaques and tangles form. In the past, this inflammation was thought to be a consequence of Alzheimer’s disease. Now scientists believe the inflammation itself starts a chain reaction ultimately contributing to the development of Alzheimer’s disease.



When cells in the brain are disrupted by inflammation, amyloid, a protein normally found in the brain, begins to act chaotically. The chaos results in the creation of sticky deposits of beta-amyloid build up and collect around the cells, making dense clumps or plaques. Because the brain can’t break the plaques down or get rid of them, they stay where they are and slowly accumulate.

**Researchers studying Alzheimer’s disease now know Alzheimer’s disease has an important connection to inflammation.** The theory that turmeric might be able to prevent and treat the illness has been proven and researchers from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) studying turmeric have found it to be more effective than the drugs currently being investigated for Alzheimer’s disease treatment and prevention. The researchers have discovered the actual structure and shape of turmeric allows it to penetrate the blood-brain barrier effectively and bind to beta-amyloid. Other research findings show turmeric helps remove beta-amyloid that’s already built up in the neurons

turmeric helps remove beta-amyloid that's already built up in the neurons. Turmeric appears to block and break up brain plaques that cause the disease and helps reverse some of the damage already present.

In Ayurvedic practices, turmeric is thought to have many medicinal properties and many in South Asia use it as a readily available antiseptic for cuts, burns and bruises. It is also used as an antibacterial agent. It is taken in some Asian countries as a dietary supplement, which allegedly helps with stomach problems and other ailments. It is popular as a tea in Okinawa, Japan. Pakistanis also use it as an anti-inflammatory agent, and remedy for gastrointestinal discomfort associated with irritable bowel syndrome, and other digestive disorders. In Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan, turmeric is applied to a piece of burnt cloth, and placed over a wound to cleanse and stimulate recovery. In addition to its Ayurvedic properties, Indians use turmeric in a wide variety of skin creams.

In India's traditional Ayurvedic medicine turmeric was used as an aid for digestive disturbances and as a treatment for fever, infections, dysentery, arthritis, jaundice and other liver problems. The traditional Chinese physicians also used turmeric medically to treat liver and gallbladder problems, stop bleeding, and relieve chest congestion and menstrual discomforts.

**Turmeric is thought to reduce inflammation by lowering histamine levels and it may also stimulate the adrenal glands to increase production of a hormone that reduces inflammation.** It is often used to ease joint pain and inflammation associated with arthritis. Researchers now believe that most chronic and life threatening diseases, including those that we commonly think of as accompanying the aging process, are linked to chronic inflammation.

Turmeric (curcumin) also harbors rich stores of antioxidants. Studies with animals show that turmeric benefits liver health. Several animal studies suggest that turmeric protects the liver from the damaging effects of certain toxins, including alcohol. These findings lend credence to the herb's history of use in liver ailments.

Among the many health benefits of turmeric, is that it harbors antiplatelet activity. The herb reduces the ability of the blood to form clots and, as such, this action may improve circulation as well as offer some protection against heart attacks and strokes. Turmeric helps digest fats by stimulating the flow of bile. Laboratory studies indicate that curcumin has anti-cancer activity.

In laboratory tests curcumin has been shown to assist in the prevention of prostate cancer, to prevent breast cancer from spreading into the lungs and to reduce certain types of melanoma. There has also been research that suggests it may be helpful in reducing the risk of childhood leukemia. Scientists in Japan have defined curcumin as a broad-spectrum anti-cancer agent.

In Chinese culture, turmeric has long been used as a treatment for depression and its effect of speeding up the metabolism suggests that it could well be helpful in weight management. Although not confirmed yet in human trials, laboratory animals given turmeric had reduced levels of blood sugar and cholesterol suggesting that turmeric may in the future be helpful in diabetes and heart disease.

Many people want the health benefits of turmeric, but don't care for the slightly bitter taste. If not eaten regularly in your food you can add turmeric to your diet by taking turmeric supplements in the form of capsules. Turmeric can also be taken in the form of a tea but on its own it is not to everyone's taste. A small amount of black pepper or bromelain is said to increase the absorption of the active ingredient curcumin considerably.

Turmeric side effects are not many, but may occur with use of more than the recommended doses. Doing so may cause upset stomach or other gastrointestinal problems such as diarrhea or constipation. Also, turmeric should not be taken in some situations, including if you have a bile duct blockage, a blood-clotting disorder, or stomach ulcers (or a history of them). Pregnant and nursing women should use discretion in using turmeric, as the effects in such cases are unknown.



NSP products that we recommend include: Super ORAC Antioxidant (90 caps), Grapeine® w/Protectors, SynerPro® (90 tabs), Adaptamax® (100 caps), Alpha Lipoic Acid (60 caps), Artemesia Combination (100 caps) and Garlic, High Potency, SynerPro (60 tabs).

**Yours in Good Health!**

Sincerely,

Dr. Jack and Chris Ritchason  
Back to Herbs Team

#### References:

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