



TOPIC SUMMARY for Healthcare Professionals

Turmeric

Overview

Turmeric is the common name for *Curcuma longa* root. The plant is part of the ginger family.

Uses: Turmeric is used for several inflammatory conditions including different kinds of arthritis, upset stomach, diarrhea, headaches, indigestion, respiratory infections, fever, and cystitis. In India, it is sometimes applied directly to skin rashes. Some preliminary studies suggest anti-cancer effects as well, but these effects should be studied in larger trials before routinely recommending turmeric as an anti-cancer remedy.

How it works: Turmeric contains compounds that block cyclo-oxygenase 2 enzymes like some anti-inflammatory medicines. There may be other ways it helps relieve inflammation, too.

Intake Recommendations

Turmeric doses vary in different studies. Remember, research uses double-blind studies and provides herbs in capsule forms. 500 milligrams (less than ¼ teaspoon) of powdered, encapsulated turmeric taken 4 times daily has been used in some studies showing benefits on indigestion. Another study has shown benefits for patients with ulcerative colitis by taking turmeric twice daily. Other studies have shown benefits with similar doses for rheumatoid arthritis. Absorption is increased by taking turmeric with black pepper and some source of fat or oil, like olive oil, which also has anti-inflammatory properties.

Sources of Turmeric

Turmeric is consumed as part of the normal diet in India as a deep yellow spice used in curries and some kinds of prepared mustard.

Safety

As with any product taken by mouth, turmeric can cause an upset stomach. Allergies to any herbal substance are possible. There are no studies evaluating the safety of turmeric products for women who are pregnant or nursing. Doses of up to 12 grams (a little more than 2 teaspoons) have been used safely for months. It can increase the contraction of the gallbladder so use caution in taking turmeric supplements if you have gall bladder disease. Theoretically, it could reduce blood clotting by platelets, so don't take it right before scheduled surgery.

Turmeric is generally recognized as safe by [Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database](http://naturalmedicines.comprehensive-database.com).

Product Information

No government agency routinely tests herbal products. Dietary supplements like turmeric are regulated more like food than like drugs. There is variability in the quality of turmeric products, and you cannot always tell what is in a product from reading the label, even the fine print. We recommend using brands that have the USP stamp of approval. **ConsumerLab has evaluated turmeric products.**

If you want to take capsules rather than the raw spice powder, these brands have passed testing and at the time of testing were less expensive than other brands:

- Doctors Best Curcumin C3 Complex
- Jarrow Formulas Curcumin 95
- NOW Curcumin
- Solgar Turmeric
- Thompson Turmeric Curcumin
- Life Extension Super Bio Curcumin contains ingredients that may improve absorption.

For turmeric spice, try The Spice Hunter India Turmeric (ground), which had the least insect parts of tested products (spices commonly contain small amounts of insect parts and rat hair, but the US FDA does set limits). If you purchase spices at an Indian grocery, you may be able to buy whole root and grind your own.

The US [National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#) has a patient handout about turmeric.

READ LABELS carefully! For more information, see

https://www.consumerlab.com/reviews/Turmeric_Curcumin_Supplements/turmeric/

Disclaimer: The *Herbs and Dietary Supplements Across the Lifespan Program* does not endorse products or the efficacy or safety of mentioned products.