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Curcumin Benefits Women's Hormonal Health and the Male Prostate

Dr. Mercola | August 15th, 2017

You probably don't realize how many common spices found in your kitchen cabinet contain robust nutrients.*

Of course, you naturally use many of these colorful herbs and spices to add flavor to your food. But many of them go well beyond simply tantalizing your taste buds.

Some of the spices you use can have powerful health-supporting properties.* And this is one of the underlying reasons why they've been used for thousands of years in ancient cultures. Modern research is now taking a closer look at some of these common spices and their potential to enrich your overall health.

One such spice is turmeric, the colorful "curry spice" often used in Indian cuisine. It's even probably in your cabinet. Turmeric contains curcumin. This is the pigment that gives turmeric its distinctive yellow-orange brilliance. And curcumin is a polyphenol identified as turmeric's primary active compound…

So what are some of the ways you can take advantage of curcumin? Well, one approach is to use it in your cooking as a pure turmeric or curry powder (turmeric powder is my preference).

There are some more effective ways I feel you can take advantage of curcumin benefits. And I'm ready to share with you some of those strategies coming up. But first, you might be wondering… "Where does this turmeric spice get its 'roots' from?"

Why Some Hail It as 'The Spice of Life'

A few years ago, I traveled over 15,000 miles to India to learn more about the herbs and spices that lie at the heart of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is India's recognized authoritative source of knowledge and truth in holistic health promotion.

Of the many herbs and spices I studied, one that particularly caught my attention was turmeric. Turmeric is a spice that has been often labeled "The Spice of Life."*
Turmeric has been used as a spice and in other variety of ways 1000s of years ago in many ancient cultures.

Even though there may be some debate about the timing of turmeric's first use as a healthy spice, folklore has spawned many clues on when and how it was possibly used…

- Thousands of years ago, people in India and China used turmeric in a variety of ways. Some stories suggest traditional use may date back more than 10,000 years ago in India.
- The ancient Polynesians carried turmeric with them on their incredible voyage across the

Pacific Ocean to Hawaii. Today, Hawaiians still use this spice known to them as Olena.
- In addition to a number of health-promoting properties, many ancient cultures used turmeric as a dye and it was even worn as dried beads to ward off evil spirits.

While in China, Marco Polo in 1280 AD recorded information on turmeric in his diary: "There is also a vegetable which has all the properties of true saffron, as well the smell and the color, and yet it is not really saffron."

So, turmeric has been used as a substitute for saffron (an old world spice) in Europe for over 700 years. And when it comes to curcumin in turmeric, western scientists first isolated the curcumin molecule in 1815, obtained its crystalline form in 1870, and determined its overall structure by the early 1900s.

How Curcumin Benefits Your Health in a Variety of Ways*

The potential antioxidant benefits (described above) from curcumin are actually just the tip of the iceberg. Many studies have shown a variety of different ways that this spice can support your overall vitality.*

Curcumin…

- Can assist gallbladder function*
- May help aid in minimizing oxidative stress*
- Supports postmenopausal health in women (along with exercise)*

Plus, with this spice capable of crossing the blood-brain barrier, curcumin's potential as a neuroprotective nutrient and supporter of overall brain health should not be overlooked.*

With all these promising benefits, what are some of your best sources of curcumin?

Adding More Than Just Flavor to Your Food

Add a few sprinkles of turmeric powder to your favorite curry dish to spice up the flavor.

I spoke early on how you could add turmeric powder to your cooking. Even though there are better ways to reap the benefits of curcumin, spicing up your food is a great place to start.

My only recommendation is that you use a high-quality turmeric powder (preferably organic) because it tends to have more curcumin than standard curry powder.

Here are a couple ideas on how to add turmeric powder to "wake-up" a variety of foods:

- Shake a few sprinkles of turmeric powder into any curry dish you're making to give it more flavor. Turmeric powder is a primary ingredient in Thai-style yellow curries, Indonesian rendang (a coconut-infused beef stew), and many northern Indian curries.
- Add a teaspoon of turmeric powder to tomato-based sauces to create more complex flavors. Turmeric's earthy bitterness creates a contrast to the sweet tanginess of the tomatoes for a tantalizing taste.
- Turmeric's earthy taste can enhance soups, stews, and leafy green sautés. You could even add a pinch to an egg-white omelet to spice up the flavor.

These are just a few examples of how this extraordinary spice can be used in your favorite foods. I'm sure there are dozens of more elaborate recipes on the Internet if you really want to research

it.

Unfortunately, as enjoyable as the flavor of turmeric powder is in your food, there are obstacles when it comes to reaping the potential health benefits…

Do-It-Yourself Strategies That May Help

Curcumin powder can be used in do-it-yourself approaches to help improve its bioavailability of the nutrient.

If you're into DIY (do-it-yourself) approaches, there are a couple of things you can do to improve curcumin's bioavailability.

One approach is to…

- Use curcumin powder (preferably organic) to make a microemulsion
- Combine a tablespoon of powder with 1-2 egg yolks and add a teaspoon or two of melted coconut oil
- Mix together in a high-speed blender to emulsify the powder

Here's another DIY strategy to consider…

- Put one tablespoon of curcumin powder into a quart of boiling water
- After boiling for 10 minutes, you will have created a 12% solution
- Once cooled, you should drink the solution as soon as possible because over time the curcumin will gradually fall out of the solution

One note of caution when using curcumin powder is that it is a very potent yellow pigment. There are obvious reasons why many ancient cultures used it as a dye… it can permanently discolor surfaces if you're not extra careful.

These are a couple DIY strategies you can use to potentially improve the bioavailability of curcumin. However, you simply may not be into doing something like this yourself, or may not even want to spend the necessary time. Well, there is another strategy for you to consider…

Could Curcumin Supplementation Be a Good Alternative?

Just like curcumin's bioavailability is challenging when consuming it in foods you eat, such is the case with supplementation as well.

In a quality test conducted a few years ago, an independent lab evaluated some turmeric/ curcumin supplements and reported that…

- 20% of turmeric supplements delivered less than 15% of promised curcuminoid compounds
- Consumers need to carefully scrutinize turmeric or curcumin supplements to make sure they're getting a quality product
- Because curcumin presents absorption challenges, certain specially formulated products may offer greater bioavailability

So the quality of curcumin supplements is a very serious issue if you are considering using curcumin. You simply must be well-informed when choosing a supplement.

I can tell you that I've spent about five years researching this phenomenal spice. And I truly believe that with all the astounding advances in supplementation technology being made today, that the high-quality bioavailability issue can be addressed.