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“Curcumin Benefits Women's Hormonal Health and the Male Prostate*”

By Dr. Mercola | November 2017

Why Some Hail It as “The Spice of Life”

A few years ago, I travelled 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 often been labelled “The Spice of Life”. 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.

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.

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 flavour. 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 flavours. 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 sautes. You could even add a pinch to an egg-white omelet to spice up the flavour.

How Bioavailability Issues Can Present a Daunting Challenge

Whether added in the food you eat or even in a supplement you might take, curcumin presents absorption challenges to your body.

Here are some of the basic issues with its bioavailability. Curcumin...

- **Tends to be unstable at intestinal pH levels**
- Presents a poor pharmacokinetic profile for absorbing it orally
- **Has a tendency toward rapid elimination from your body**

The bottom line with curcumin... it's simply not easy for your body to absorb. A great deal of curcumin taken orally simply passes through your system without being absorbed. And the curcumin that does not manage to get absorbed in your intestine can be quickly metabolized by the liver.