

Curcumin – Nature’s Pain Reliever – Part II

By Mike King, Mari-Mann Herbs

Curcumin is the principal curcuminoid and pigment of the popular spice turmeric, harvested from the plant’s root. Turmeric has a long history as a medicinal plant, having been used in both Ayurvedic (a form of medical practice native to the Indian subcontinent) and traditional Chinese medicine for centuries.

Last month we talked about some of the health benefits of curcumin. Here are some more:

- **Promotes Wound Healing:** Curcumin promotes wound healing, protects the kidneys, and reduces liver inflammation.

Curcumin is an extremely health-giving pigment from the turmeric root, composed of over 150 healing adaptogenic (healing/balancing), compounds. Pigments help to protect all living organisms from the degrading and damaging ultraviolet rays from the sun. When we eat those pigments we get their life giving protective mechanisms which nature has innately refined over millions of years.

- **Eases Digestion:** Herbalists consider curcumin to be a digestive “bitter” which means that it helps to ease digestion and aids liver and bile function. A leading benefit of curcumin is that it reduces inflammatory compounds in the intestines, strengthening the intestinal wall and preventing leaky gut.

- **Heart Health:** Many curcumin studies show its ability to protect your heart and circulatory system. Curcumin raises the levels of HDL or “good” cholesterol. One Indian study showed that 500mg a day of curcumin increased the HDL cholesterol by 29 percent¹.

It helps to relax the arterial wall, reduces hardening of the arteries, dissolves clots, allows blood to flow more freely, reverses plaque buildup and helps failing hearts return to the normal pumping capacity. In a 2008 Canadian Research Institutes of Health Research published study, curcumin prevented the creation of scar tissue in the heart. The Peter Munk Cardiac Center of the Toronto General Hospital reported that curcumin may dramatically reduce the chance of developing heart failure. Researchers wrote, “When the herb is given orally, it may prevent and reverse hypertrophy, restore heart function, and reduce scar formation.”

- **Effective in Treating Depression:** Curcumin is effective in treating depression and fatigue. Numerous studies support curcumin’s ability to improve levels of neurotransmitters and thereby improve mood. Curcumin increases serotonin and dopamine levels, acts like pharmaceutical drugs, without the side effects, generates new brain cells, and is a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory mood improver.

- **Cancer Prevention:** There is a growing body of research suggesting that curcumin may even help prevent or treat cancer. Curcumin is thought to have antioxidant properties, which means it may decrease swelling and inflammation. It’s being explored as a cancer treatment in part because inflammation appears to play a role in cancer. Laboratory and animal research suggests that curcumin may prevent cancer, slow the spread of cancer, make chemotherapy more effective, and protect healthy cells from damage by radiation therapy. Studies of curcumin in people with cancer are still in the early stages. Clinical trials are underway to investigate curcumin as a way to prevent cancer in people with precancerous conditions, as a cancer treatment, and as a remedy for signs and symptoms caused by cancer treatments. Research is ongoing, and there isn’t enough evidence to recommend curcumin as a replacement for conventional medical treatment at this time. As always, talk with your qualified health care practitioner before using any supplement.

Dosage

Unfortunately, to get enough Curcumin to be effective you would have to be willing to eat curry three times daily. Curcumin in its common form from the turmeric root is not very bioavailable. Here’s the good news: For over 5,000 years, Indian culture has consumed turmeric root, but always heated in buffalo milk or clarified butter.

Fat is always a superior delivery system than water. It gives a higher blood level and a longer blood retention time. Science has found a way to get all the benefits without having to ingest large amounts of the fibrous root. It was discovered that phosphatidylcholine (lecithin) can enhance the absorption and retention time. phospholipid (fat) extracts provide up to 10 times the absorption and a longer blood retention time than the previous standard extracts, as it remains in the body for up to 12 hours. When taking curcumin, look for high quality supplements.

Some theroectical concerns have been raised that because curcumin is a heavy metal chelator, it might cause problems with anemia. According to Ajay Goel, Phd, director of Epigenetics and Cancer Prevention at Baylor University Medical Center, "Curcumin does [a] zillion things, but none of these effects are so strong and drastic to be unsafe in any manner. I have never heard of anyone becoming anemic after curcumin supplementation."

Clinical studies in humans with high doses (2–12 grams) of curcumin have shown few side effects, with some subjects reporting mild nausea or diarrhea.

There is no or little evidence to suggest curcumin is either safe or unsafe for pregnant women. It is always wise to consult a qualified health care practitioner when using any supplement or pharmaceutical when pregnant or breast-feeding.

Mari-Mann Herbs™ carries a wide variety of high quality curcuin supplements. Mike King is a medical researcher, nutraceutical scientist, and medicinal herb specialist. He also owns and operates Mari-Mann Herbs™ located at 1405 Mari-Mann Ln., Decatur, IL 62521. There is a health food store/gift shop and herb garden, which are open daily.

For more information on leading supplements/nutraceuticals and alternative health care items, please call 217-429-1555. Mari-Mann™ is also a tourist attraction and is recognized as an official Illinois Herb Garden.

*This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

Sources:

1. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1291482