

# Turmeric - The Wondrous Spice

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*Curcuma longa*, or Turmeric, is being used from ages for its medicinal purpose. Ayurveda, the system of traditional medicine from 1st millennium BC in India, has recognized turmeric as an age-old cure for common diseases. *Curcuma longa* has now been turned into a new age wonder drug that could cure even cancer. Turmeric is a uniquely Indian spice and India produces nearly all the world's turmeric, and consumes 80% of that crop. India exports 28 tons of turmeric annually, which is 60% of world exports. Turmeric is a member of the ginger family. Its stalk has the healing properties. It has a bright yellow color because of the presence of polyphenols curcuminoids in it. In the past few years researchers have been exploring myriad aspects of this compound.

The polyphenol is well known for its anti-tumour, anti-oxidant, anti-arthritis, anti-amyloid, anti-ischemic and anti-inflammatory properties. Its anti-inflammatory properties are due to its ability to inhibit eicosanoid biosynthesis. Turmeric's key component, *curcumin*, gives it curative property. These properties are limited because curcumin is not soluble in water, so only 60 to 66% of curcumin gets absorbed by the human body. Curcumin has to be used in high doses for therapeutic benefit. The remaining 34-40% either gets rejected as waste or breaks down in the presence of enzymes in the liver and the intestines. This difficulty in delivering curcumin reduces its use. It can be used successfully by overcoming its absorption problems.

The M D Anderson Cancer Center in the University of Texas has carried out researches which show that if curcumin is encased in nanoparticles, it can prove to be highly effective in treating breast cancers. The results suggested nanocurcumin would be able to treat breast cancer but further studies are needed. The results were published in the May 2009 issue of the International Journal of Nanomedicine.

Experiments are going on with curcumin wrapped in tiny packages made up of membranes of fats and phosphates. It will deliver curcumin directly to the affected cells. Techniques prevent curcumin from disintegrating and increase its availability in the body. It has been found that curcumin can be used to treat Alzheimer's disease and simple body illness like sore throat and cold.

Research carried out at Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation has found that heat increases the turmeric absorption up to twelve-fold. The solubility of turmeric increases when it is boiled with water for 10 minutes. Turmeric mixed in hot milk further enhances its curative powers.

- Turmeric is naturally anti-inflammatory and produces no side effects thus it is used in many anti-inflammatory drugs.
- Turmeric helps in weight management because it has the potential to aid in fat metabolism.

- If we are to look for the reason that India has such low Alzheimers Disease rates, usage of turmeric in Indian kitchen can be one of the major reason. Curcumin has been found to be effective in the body rid itself of aluminum, lead, mercury and other hazardous metals and cleanse the body. Our body is exposed to small amounts of these toxins in our daily life when we are exposed to various things. These chemicals may contribute to chronic health problems and age-related diseases.
- The antibacterial, anti-viral, anti-fungal, anti-parasitic and antiseptic property of turmeric makes it useful agent for disinfecting cuts and burns.
- It is an important part of kitchen in most of the Asian countries. Turmeric is also used as a form of digestive aids.
- Turmeric can prove to be effective in arthritis, jaundice and fever.
- A study done in 1992 proves that turmeric can reduce cholesterol level and fight atherosclerosis.
- If turmeric is combined with certain vegetables, it can help in treating and preventing prostate cancer.
- Turmeric according to Ayurveda helps in purifying the blood and remedy skin condition. It purifies and nourishes the blood and skin. This brings the natural glow of health which is amplified through clarity.
- Other therapeutic uses of turmeric include: AIDS/HIV, anemia, cancer, diabetes, digestion, food poisoning, gallstones, indigestion.
- Turmeric if taken in your food gives far more benefits rather than taking supplements. If you go for a dosage like 600mg per day it may cause digestive problems because it is also very spicy. Thus, having turmeric in curry is not only good for health but also gives a nice color and super aroma.
- If turmeric is applied externally it stops pain and swelling, heals wounds, and treats many skin diseases ranging from acne to leprosy.
- Turmeric is very good for treating bronchitis and other pulmonary infections.
- Turmeric tones the gums and destroys bacteria whose acidic wastes cause cavities.

For toothaches or tooth decay, use Turmeric and Clove paste.

- Turmeric is effective in treating malaria and in the prevention of cervical cancer.

## Beauty benefits of Turmeric

The numerous benefits of turmeric- the exotic, yellow spice are now well known in the world. Turmeric is an inexpensive beauty aid which makes skin clean and bring natural glow which remains there for whole life. So before you go to buy an expensive beauty product in the market just try following tips.

### Turmeric as beauty aid:

There are some mask made from using turmeric. You can choose according to your skin type. These masks have the healing properties and act as cleanser.

For oily skin- Mix sandalwood powder, milk, a few drops of lemon and a pinch of turmeric powder. Let it dry. Wash off. You will get a lovely skin glow and particularly benefits normal to oily skin.

For dry skin- Take egg white of one egg. Add two-three drops of each olive oil, fresh lemon juice and rose water. Put a dash of turmeric and apply evenly on face, ears and neck. Wash off after 15 minutes with cold water.

For normal skin-Take 3-4 very ripe strawberries. Mash them and add cornstarch and a pinch of turmeric. Mix well to make a mask. Apply it on your face, avoiding contact with delicate areas. Wash when dries off.

### Turmeric for wrinkle free skin

Add a pinch of turmeric to 2 tbsp of buttermilk and apply this around your eyes and wash with cold water after 15 minutes. Regular use of this will not only eliminate the wrinkles but will also remove dark circles under eyes.

### Turmeric for acne and scars

Take 1 tablespoon of turmeric powder, cucumber juice and add a few drops of jojoba oil or coconut oil. Make a cream like mixture and apply on acne and nearby areas. Leave it for 20 minutes. You can also leave this for overnight.

It also acts as an excellent anti-scarring agent when 1 tbsp is mixed with a few drops of milk and applied on skin for 15 minutes. It is also used for spots caused due to pigmentation or blotches and also for diseases like eczema.