

## Turmeric

Turmeric is a type of spice that is claimed to help with a variety of conditions, including depression, heartburn, and cancer. It contains several compounds that may stimulate the immune system, have anti-inflammatory effects, and help prevent blood clots. Although it is a 'natural' product, turmeric may cause side effects, such as nausea and diarrhea.

Turmeric is a spice and coloring agent used in curry powder. There has been much interest in using it to treat or prevent a number of different medical conditions, such as depression, heartburn, and cancer. There are many other reported uses as well, some of which are more valid than others.

It is not known exactly how turmeric works, as there are several compounds in it that may have medicinal properties. These compounds may have several different effects in the human body, such as:

*Angiogenesis inhibition* -- Compounds in turmeric may inhibit the growth of new blood vessels (a process known as angiogenesis). This property may be useful for preventing or treating cancer, but could cause problems in the treatment of heart disease.

*Anti-inflammatory* -- Compounds in turmeric seems to inhibit several different inflammatory substances and enzymes. This may potentially be helpful for a number of conditions, such as arthritis or heart disease.

*Blood clotting* -- There is some evidence that compounds in turmeric may help prevent blood platelets from sticking together (a process known as platelet aggregation), an important step in the formation of blood clots.

*Antioxidant effects* -- There is also some evidence that it may have antioxidant effects and may also stimulate the immune system.

There is not enough evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of the spice for most uses. Some uses have more scientific evidence in their favor than others.

Turmeric is considered safe when used in normal amounts in food. It is not known if medicinal uses are equally as safe. Some people are more likely than others to experience problems.

- A bleeding disorder
- Gallstones or gallbladder disease
- Any allergies, including allergies to foods, dyes, or preservatives.

It is not known what exactly to expect from an overdose, or even if a turmeric overdose is possible. It is reasonable to assume that taking too much may cause the usual side effects, but perhaps more severely.

### *Turmeric Drug Interactions*

Turmeric might interact with medications that ‘thin’ the blood, increasing the risk of bleeding (especially when turmeric is used at medicinal doses, which are higher than amounts usually used in foods). Some of these anti-platelet or anticoagulant medications that could lead to turmeric drug interactions include:

- Aspirin
- Clopidogrel
- Heparin or heparin-like products, such as:
  - Dalteparin
  - Enoxaparin

- Tinzaparin
  
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as:
  - Celecoxib
  - Diclofenac
  - Etodolac
  - Ibuprofen
  - Indomethacin
  - Ketoprofen
  - Ketorolac
  - Meloxicam
  - Naproxen or naproxen sodium
  - Nabumetone
  - Oxaprozin
  - Warfarin

Combining turmeric with such ‘blood thinners’ could possible increase the risk of bleeding, including dangerous internal bleeding (such as bleeding in the brain).

#### *What Are the Benefits of Turmeric*

There has been much interest in turmeric’s potential health benefits. Specifically, taking it by mouth is claimed to provide benefit when used for the following conditions:

- Depression
- Indigestion or heartburn
- Abdominal (stomach) pain or bloating
- Excessive bleeding
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Diarrhea
- Gas
- Loss of appetite

- Jaundice, hepatitis, or other liver problems
- High cholesterol
- Gallstones or other gallbladder problems
- Leprosy
- Fever
- Absent menstrual periods (amenorrhea)
- Cancer (for both prevention and treatment)
- Fluid retention
- Headache
- Bronchitis, the common cold, or other respiratory infections
- Fibromyalgia
- Kidney problems
- Bladder infections.

Applying turmeric topically (to the skin) is said to be beneficial for the following problems:

- Pain
- Ringworm
- Bruising
- Leech wounds
- Infections
- Eczema
- Inflammation.

Some of these possible turmeric benefits have more evidence in their favor than others.

### *Safety*

- Theoretically, turmeric may interfere with the blood's ability to form clots. This can be a problem for people who are already predisposed to bleeding, such as those with bleeding disorders.

- Turmeric could make gallstones or some other gallbladder problems worse.
- Turmeric may, theoretically, interact with some medications