

... TURMERIC.

Originally from South Asia, *Curcuma longa* L. is a herbaceous plant of the zingiberaceae family, which also belong to the ginger and cardamom. The word derives from Arabic turmeric "kourkoum" (saffron), because they thought that turmeric was a variety of saffron. Its rhizome is widely used in Asian cuisine: It's the main component of curry and it is responsible for its characteristic color. The turmeric extract is also used as dye cataloged in the food code of the European Union as an E-100.

During recent decades, turmeric is the subject of many studies to confirm and explain the properties attributed to it. Such studies focus primarily on the activity of its active principle: curcumin.

In Ayurvedic medicine, turmeric has been used for millennia to treat conditions associated with inflammation. The anti-inflammatory activity of turmeric can be compared to that of cortisone, phenylbutazone and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory. Curcumin inhibits the enzymes involved in the synthesis of inflammatory substances such as prostaglandin E2 and leukotrienes. It also seems to increase the effect of cortisol and decrease its degradation liver. When curcumin is associated with essential fatty acids, they potentiate each other in their anti-inflammatory actions.

Turmeric improves digestion by stimulating the liver and gallbladder, and increasing the production of pancreatic enzymes. It also has antyoxidante, hepatoprotective and pesticidal gut action.

Concerning cardiovascular system, the curcumin prevents lipid peroxidation and prevents its accumulation in the membrane of the arteries. In addition, it significantly reduces blood cholesterol levels due to intestinal reabsorption and its transformation to bile acids that are subsequently eliminated with bile. Its fluidizing action prevents the formation of clots that could account for phlebitis or thrombosis, for example.

Used as a preventive and curative, turmeric regressed existing cancers (mainly digestive tract, liver, breast and skin), suppresses the mutagenic effect of certain toxic substances such as tobacco and inhibits the formation of nitrosamine (product formed from highly carcinogenic nitrites and nitrates). Like milk thistle, turmeric prevents tissue damage that can occur during chemotherapy.

Curcumin inhibits the growth of many gram positive and gram negative bacteria (*Entamoeba hisolytic*, *Staphylococcus*, *Streptococcus*, *Clostridium perfringens*) and

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several pathogenic fungi. It also inhibits the production of certain toxins that can cause serious harm to the body, including aflatoxin, produced by fungi that grow in poorly preserved food.

Several studies have shown that turmeric also has an antiviral action. In the case of HIV, curcumin inhibits the synthesis of the enzyme integrase that allows the virus to integrate into the genetic code of the host cell. Another action of curcumin is inhibition of cytokine production (substances that stimulate the development of HIV in lymphocytes) by the host cell. Many clinical studies are currently underway in relation to the action of curcumin on HIV.

Also note that the benefits of turmeric are potentiated when it is simultaneously absorbed with extracts of black pepper, rich in piperine, which enhances the effectiveness of curcumin.

Used as a spice, turmeric has no side effects. Notwithstanding, those who, seeking a therapeutic effect, in taking high dose should avoid prolonged sun exposure because of the effect fotosensibilisant turmeric. People who suffer from peptic ulcer disease should not consume large quantities. If in doubt, you should consult a doctor or therapist specializing in herbal medicine.

** The above tip do not exclude or replace any medical or pharmacological.*

