



## Medicinals Herb:Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) As Traditional Medicine

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### Abstract

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is a spice used for cooking but has gained immense popularity as one of the most powerful herb for fighting various diseases. Turmeric can be found in India and other Southeast Asian countries. The dried root of the plant is ground to create the distinctive yellow turmeric powder. There are numerous chemical compounds found in turmeric, named curcuminoids, wherein the active ingredient is curcumin. Curcumin is the ingredient that gives turmeric many of its vast health benefits. The medicinal properties of this spice have been slowly revealing themselves over the centuries. Long known for its anti-inflammatory properties, recent research has revealed that turmeric is a natural wonder, proving beneficial in the treatment of many different health conditions from cancer to Alzheimer's disease. An ointment base on the spice is used as an antiseptic in India. Turmeric water is an Asian cosmetic applied to impart a golden glow to the complexion. The rhizome is generally the part of the plant that is most widely used. It can be prepared in various ways and is reputed to alleviate asthma and coughs. Hot water extracts of the dried rhizome have been taken orally in Ayurvedic medicine to reduce inflammation. Turmeric is also regarded as a 'rasayana' herb, which is a branch of Ayurvedic medicine. Here turmeric is used to counteract ageing processes.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda, Turmeric, Traditional Medicine.

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### 1. Introduction

Natural plant products have been used throughout human history for various purposes. Having co-evolved with animal life, many of the plants from which these natural products are derived are billions of years old. Tens of thousands of these products are produced as secondary metabolites by higher plants as a natural defense mechanism against disease and infection. Many of these natural products have pharmacological or biological activity that can be exploited in pharmaceutical drug discovery and drug design. Medicines derived from plants have played a pivotal role in the health care of many cultures, both ancient and modern (Newman, Cragg, and Sander 2003; Butler 2004; Balunas and Kinghorn 2005; Gurib-Fakim 2006; Newman and Cragg 2007). The Indian system of holistic medicine known as "Ayurveda" uses mainly plant-based drugs or formulations to treat various ailments, including cancer. Of the at least 877 small-molecule drugs introduced worldwide between 1981 and 2002, the origins of most (61%) can be traced to natural products (Newman and Cragg 2007). Although many synthetic drugs are produced through combinatorial chemistry, plant-based drugs are more suitable, at least in biochemical terms,



for human use. Nonetheless, modern medicine has neither held in very high esteem nor encouraged the medicinal use of natural products.

Turmeric has also been used for centuries in Ayurvedic medicine, which integrates the medicinal properties of herbs with food. This extraordinary herb has found its way into the spotlight in the west and rest of globe, because of its wide range of medicinal benefits. Use of turmeric dates back nearly 4000 years to the Vedic culture in India. It is extensively used in Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha medicine as home remedy for various diseases. Because of its brilliant yellow color, turmeric is also known as “Indian saffron.” Modern medicine has begun to recognize its importance, as indicated by the over 3000 publications dealing with turmeric that came out within the last 25 years. This review first discusses in vitro studies with turmeric, followed by animal studies, and finally studies carried out on humans; the safety and efficacy of turmeric are further addressed.

#### ***History of turmeric:***

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) and several other species of the curcuma genus grow wild in the forests of Southern Asia including India, Indonesia, Indochina, nearby Asian countries, and some Pacific Islands including Hawaii. All of these areas have traditional culinary and medicinal uses going back to pre-history. In the Indian Ayurveda system of herbal medicine, turmeric is known as strengthening and warming to the whole body. Traditional uses in India include to improve digestion, to improve intestinal flora, to eliminate worms, to relieve gas, to cleanse and strengthen the liver and gallbladder, to normalize menstruation, for relief of arthritis and swelling, as a blood purifier, to warm and promote proper metabolism correcting both excesses and deficiencies, for local application on sprains, burns, cuts, bruises, insect bites and itches, for soothing action in cough and asthma, as antibacterial and anti-fungus, and in any condition of weakness or debility. According to Michael Moriarty, “The ancient Hawaiians used this herb for many things, including the prevention and treatment of sinus infections (it is very astringent and appears to pull mucus out), ear infections (swimmers’ ear) and gastrointestinal ulcers.” Turmeric is eaten as a food both raw and cooked throughout Asia.

#### ***Medicinal Uses of Turmeric:***

From many years awareness of turmeric and its use as medicine is continuously increasing. A flowering plant, Turmeric, in the ginger family, is commonly used as a food coloring and is one of the basic ingredients in curry powder. To heal many health disorders like liver problems, digestive disorders, treatment for skin diseases and wound healing turmeric has long been used in Medicinal as an anti-inflammatory. Curcumin is the active ingredient in turmeric which has been shown to have a wide range of therapeutic effects. Turmeric decreases congestion and inflammation from stagnant mucous membranes. Turmeric is anti-inflammatory to the mucous membranes, which coat the throat, lungs, stomach and intestines. Regular use of turmeric can benefit from Colitis, Crohn's disease, diarrhea, and post-giardia or post salmonella conditions. The itching and inflammation that accompanies hemorrhoids and anal fissures can reduce by use of turmeric. Turmeric can



also benefit skin conditions including: eczema, psoriasis and acne, for those it is potent detoxifier.

**Conclusion and future scope:**

Turmeric has been traditionally recognized in India as a flavorful, colorful condiment, and as an Ayurvedic medicine to improve appetite, act as a carminative, and treat gallstones and other biliary problems, as well as dyspepsia. It is a traditional remedy in India, China, and other Southeast Asian countries to treat asthma and colds, and is applied as an ointment, paste, or poultice for scabies, boils, bruises, insect bites, and other skin lesions. Turmeric is given orally for many other conditions, including menstrual problems, pain, epilepsy, respiratory tract infections, bleeding, diarrhea, jaundice, and rheumatic disorders. More recently, it has gained a reputation as an anti-inflammatory agent, a treatment for hypercholesterolemia, an antioxidant, and a cancer preventative, and is claimed to prevent cardiovascular and other degenerative changes of aging. Claims also are made for its value in allergy, AIDS, cataracts, and other diseases. Curcumin is added to foods such as butter and margarine to prevent oxidation and to improve the color. Turmeric is a valued spicy condiment that has been traditionally used to improve digestion and to treat dyspepsia and inflammatory disorders.

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