

MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

November 2017

Turmeric: Miracle Spice or Overhype?

By Lisa Lau, Registered Dietitian at the Georgina Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic

Turmeric is a spice that has long been used in cooking and in traditional Indian medicine. In modern medicine, there has also been lots of research exploring the benefits of this spice for various chronic and inflammatory diseases. This issue will review the current evidence and explain whether this spice is really a miracle spice that it is often claimed to be.

Turmeric Basics

Turmeric is a member of the ginger family and judging it by its appearance would easily confirm that. The root of the turmeric plant is what is often used, either in fresh or dried form. The main compound in turmeric that has been associated with health benefits is called curcumin, which is part of a larger group of compounds called curcuminoids that give turmeric its distinct bright yellow colour.



Health Benefits

The focus of curcumin's health benefits come primarily from its promising anti-inflammatory properties. There are a number of chronic diseases that are related to chronic inflammation in the body, and therefore this has led to the interest in curcumin's ability to lower this disease-related inflammation.

Research behind curcumin comes primarily from animal studies and small-scale human studies. Many of these research studies have shown positive results with its use for human conditions including pre-diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, inflammatory bowel diseases, and some cancers. Positive findings include improved blood markers for inflammation and improved symptom management in some cases. Despite these promising findings, some argue that there are limitations to these studies that make it difficult to conclude whether turmeric is as beneficial as it is claimed to be.

One limitation of curcumin in existing research is that it has been found to be poorly absorbed in our body. This has been one of the theories behind why some studies have also failed to find significant clinical improvements. Strategies are being explored on how to increase curcumin absorption levels in our body.

Take Away

There is promising research that suggests curcumin in turmeric can be beneficial for disease management through its anti-inflammatory properties. However the existing research is limited in its ability to provide clear recommendations on a safe and effective amount to consume for management of various diseases.

By including turmeric in our everyday cooking, this will likely provide some health benefit while keeping intake within safe levels. Both whole or ground dried turmeric can be used. Absorption of the curcumin compound in the turmeric can be improved by consuming it with some healthy fats and/or black pepper.

Try adding turmeric in rice or poultry to give it an earthy flavour. Roasted vegetables or vegetable soups also can pair well with turmeric, such as roasted cauliflower or squash soup. Turmeric can also be added into beverages, such as the Turmeric Tea recipe on the next page.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

October 2017

Turmeric Tea (Golden Milk)

Golden milk dates back to the practices of traditional Indian medicine from over 3000 years ago. Turmeric has long been used during this time, and is the main ingredient in this warm and comforting beverage that gives it its signature golden colour. A quick search online will reveal many variations of this turmeric tea, allowing you to adapt it to just the way you like it!



Makes 2 cups

Ingredients:

2 cups	Almond milk, original
¼ cup	Coconut milk, light (for cooking)
1 tsp	Ground turmeric
½ tsp	Ground cinnamon
3-4 slices	Ginger root
2-3	Whole black peppercorns
1 tsp	Honey (optional)

Directions:

1. Combine ingredients in a saucepan. Bring to a boil before reducing to low heat and simmer for about 10 minutes.
2. Strain the milk into a cup and enjoy!

Nutrition information (Per cup, without added honey):

90 calories, Carbohydrate 11 g (4% DV), Fibre 1 g (4%), Sugars 8 g (includes 0 g added sugars), Fat 4.5 g (6% DV), Protein 2 g, Sodium 150 mg (7% DV), Potassium 4%