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Curcumin

by Raymond Francis

Mother Nature is so wonderful. It automatically provides us with all the things we need to be healthy. Our job is to recognize this and work with nature. Instead, the norm in the modern culture is to work against nature, which is why we have so much disease. One of the wonders of nature is a spice called turmeric. Turmeric is a member of the ginger family, and it is used as a yellow food coloring and as a traditional Indian curry spice. It has also been used as a traditional medicine in Egypt and India for at least 6000 years.

The biologically active ingredient in turmeric is called curcumin. Curcumin makes up about 2-to-3 percent of the turmeric and consists of a number of biologically active compounds called curcuminoids. Modern research has found curcumin to be an amazing substance that both helps to prevent and reverse numerous diseases, including cancer. A wealth of scientific data now shows that curcumin has powerful antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. Further, curcumin has been proven safe and without side effects even at doses of ten grams per day.

What makes curcumin so truly special is that it affects numerous genetic and biochemical pathways at the same time, resulting in a lot of very beneficial biochemistry. The fact that curcumin affects multiple molecular targets and signaling pathways provides the scientific basis for its effectiveness with so many different diseases.

All chronic diseases are inflammatory; chronic inflammation ages and destroys the body. Curcumin is an anti-inflammatory and helps to reduce inflammation and edema. This is why it works well for the many conditions that are driven by inflammation. Curcumin inhibits enzymes that are necessary for the synthesis of inflammatory chemicals in the body. It is known to prevent the synthesis of several inflammatory prostaglandins and leukotrienes and to inhibit pro-inflammatory arachidonic acid. In fact, the natural anti-inflammatory activity of curcumin is comparable to steroid drugs, without all the dangers and side effects. Studies have shown curcumin to be equal to powerful prescription drugs in treating post operative inflammation and arthritis.

Curcumin is also an antioxidant. Antioxidants protect the body from damage by free radicals. Free radicals can originate from environmental chemicals, tissue injury, infections, autoimmune processes and even from the fat cells of overweight people. Studies have shown curcumin to be comparable to vitamins C and E in exhibiting strong antioxidant activity. In fact, one study showed curcumin to be eight times more powerful than vitamin E in preventing lipid peroxidation.

Curcumin helps to prevent heart disease. It does this by inhibiting inflammation and oxidative damage, lowering cholesterol and triglyceride levels, decreasing the susceptibility of low density lipoprotein (LDL) to lipid peroxidation, and preventing blood clots by inhibiting platelet aggregation.

Curcumin has antibiotic properties. It inhibits the growth of a variety of bacteria, parasites and pathogenic fungi. Even topical applications of curcumin extract are effective for skin infections.

Curcumin protects the liver. It has been found to have a hepatoprotective effect similar to that of silymarin. Several studies have shown curcumin's ability to protect animal livers from a variety of insults induced by chemicals and drugs. Curcumin has also been found to reverse biliary hyperplasia, fatty liver and liver necrosis induced by exposure to aflatoxin.

Crohn's Disease, irritable bowel syndrome and ulcerative colitis are other disease conditions helped by curcumin. Studies show that animals pretreated with curcumin experienced a clear reduction in intestinal inflammation when exposed to an irritant as compared to controls. Curcumin accelerates wound healing and helps to repair damaged gut tissues.

Cystic fibrosis is yet another condition helped by curcumin. Researchers at Yale University found that curcumin may correct a cellular malformation that causes cystic fibrosis. In animal experiments, curcumin corrected the cystic fibrosis defect and significantly increased the survival of the animals.

Then there is cancer. Curcumin appears to suppress cancer by interfering with the production of proteins in the cancer cells that protect the cells from normal cell death. All doses of curcumin decreased cancer cell growth and triggered cell death, but higher doses were more effective, and the higher the dose used, the more cancer cells died. Topical application of curcumin also inhibited the growth of skin cancer cells. According to a 2003 study in *Blood*, Curcumin stopped the activation of processes known to lead to the spread of cancer cells and triggered apoptosis. Apoptosis is a process where cancer cells program themselves to die. A 2002 study in *Cancer* found that curcumin can stop the growth of human pancreatic cancer cells. The researchers found that curcumin inhibited the production of interleukin-8, a protein produced by white blood cells that contributes to tumor growth. According to researchers at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, curcumin blocks a key biological pathway needed for development of melanoma and other cancers. Curcumin shuts down nuclear factor-kappa B (NF-KB), a powerful master switch known to regulate expression of more than 300 genes that promote an abnormal inflammatory response, which leads to a variety of disorders, including arthritis and cancer.

And it goes on. Curcumin reduces the amyloid protein plaques associated with Alzheimer's. In a recent study involving animal brains injected with amyloid, curcumin reduced the accumulation of amyloid deposits and reduced the loss of proteins in the spaces between brain cells. India has the lowest rate of Alzheimer's in the world, probably correlated with the consumption of curry which contains turmeric, the source of curcumin.

Extensive research shows curcumin is effective in multiple situations, even including diabetes and multiple sclerosis, but as with any supplement, there is bad, good, better and best available. With supplements, you always want the best because it is the best that really work and give you true value for your money. Take the example of multivitamins. Almost half of the brands on the market don't even dissolve soon enough to be of use to the body. Even when they do dissolve, most are made from cheap synthetic molecules that do not metabolize well in the body, even having toxic effects. No matter how little you pay for them, the supplements that don't work are the most expensive supplements you can buy. Studies show that almost 98 percent of the supplements on the market are a poor value because they are ineffective and/or toxic. The best cost more, but they actually work! That is good value for your pocketbook and your health. Most curcumin products are very poorly absorbed into the blood after oral ingestion. This is why many studies on curcumin were done with intravenous injections in order to achieve effective blood levels.

It is important to use a curcumin product that is free of toxic contaminants, biologically active and well-absorbed after oral ingestion. As an example of products you don't want, ConsumerLab.com found a popular brand of curcumin to contain 18.7 mcg of lead in a daily serving — the highest amount it has ever reported. Another brand was contaminated with 8.3 mcg of lead. These amounts are well above what is safe and should be avoided. Two other curcumin products provided only 11.5% and 49.5%, respectively, of expected curcumin compounds. As usual, it's a zoo out there, which is why Beyond Health exists—to help people get the very best for their health.

Who should be taking curcumin? Almost every American today is suffering from some inflammatory disorder, from allergies to cancer. Curcumin helps with all of them. How much should you take? Most studies have been done at dosages of 400 to 1200 mg. per day depending on the need. Two 250 mg capsules would be about right for most people. People with special problems need more. Reported side effects are uncommon and are generally limited to mild stomach distress, but taking it with food usually solves this problem. Curcumin may increase the risk of bleeding in people taking warfarin or other blood thinning drugs. People taking toxic prescription drugs should always check with their doctor before taking supplements. Supplements have the potential to make a drug even more effective, thereby making it even more toxic and damaging to your body.

To help our customers obtain a reliable supply of superior-quality curcumin, Beyond Health now offers such a product—*Beyond Health Curcumin Formula*. This formula has been proven in clinical studies by the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas to be safe, pure, biologically effective and well-absorbed after oral ingestion.

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