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You are in: [Health](#)

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Curry 'may slow Alzheimer's'



Turmeric is the crucial ingredient

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BBC Weather

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[Daily E-mail](#)[News Ticker](#)[Mobiles/PDAs](#)[Feedback](#)[Help](#)[Low Graphics](#)

A spicy ingredient of many curries may be an effective treatment for Alzheimer's disease, say researchers.

A team from the University of California at Los Angeles believes that turmeric may play a role in slowing down the progression of the neurodegenerative disease.

The finding may help to explain why rates of Alzheimer's are much lower among the elderly in India than in their Western peers.

Previous studies have found that Alzheimer's affects just 1% of people over the age of 65 living in some Indian villages.

Vindaloos

Turmeric is found in everything from mild Kormas to the hottest Vindaloos. The crucial chemical is curcumin, a compound found in the spice.

“**Drugs with similar properties could potentially be used as preventative treatments for Alzheimer's disease**”

Alzheimer's is linked to the build up of knots in the brain called amyloid plaques. **Dr Richard Harvey**

Turmeric reduced the number of these plaques by a half.

The researchers also found that turmeric had other health benefits.

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It aids digestion, helps fight infection and guards against heart attacks.

In the study, middle aged and aged rats were fed a diet rich in curcumin.

All the rats received brain injections of amyloid to mimic progressive Alzheimer's disease.

Not only was there less evidence of plaque build up in the curcumin-fed rats, they also outperformed rats on normal diets when carrying out maze-based memory tests.

Curcumin also appeared to reduce Alzheimer's-related inflammation in the brain tissue.

Researcher Dr Sally Frautschy said the compound had potential as a treatment for the prevention of Alzheimer's disease - particularly in tandem with anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen.

Dr Richard Harvey, director of research at the Alzheimer's Society, said: "Curcumin has both anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

"Drugs with similar properties could potentially be used as preventative treatments for Alzheimer's disease."

However, Dr Harvey warned that it could be many years before such drugs were made widely available.

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