

herbs at a glance**Turmeric**

Keywords: turmeric root, Indian saffron, curcumin



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Introduction

This fact sheet provides basic information about the turmeric—common names, uses, potential side effects, and resources for more information. Turmeric, a shrub related to ginger, is grown throughout India, other parts of Asia, and Africa. Known for its warm, bitter taste and golden color, turmeric is commonly used in fabric dyes and foods such as curry powders, mustards, and cheeses. It should not be confused with Javanese turmeric.

Common Names—turmeric, turmeric root, Indian saffron

Latin Names—*Curcuma longa*

What Turmeric Is Used For

- In and , turmeric has been used to aid digestion and liver function, relieve arthritis pain, and regulate menstruation.
- Turmeric has also been applied directly to the skin for eczema and wound healing.
- Today, turmeric is used for conditions such as heartburn, stomach ulcers, and gallstones. It is also used to reduce inflammation, as well as to prevent and treat cancer.

How Turmeric Is Used

Turmeric's finger-like underground stems (rhizomes) are dried and taken by mouth as a powder or in capsules, teas, or liquid extracts. Turmeric can also be made into a paste and

used on the skin.

What the Science Says

- There is little reliable evidence to support the use of turmeric for any health condition because few clinical trials have been conducted.
- Preliminary findings from animal and laboratory studies suggest that a chemical found in turmeric—called curcumin—may have anti-inflammatory and anticancer properties, but these findings have not been confirmed in people.
- NCCAM-funded investigators are studying the active chemicals in turmeric and their effects—particularly anti-inflammatory effects—in people to better understand how turmeric might be used for health purposes.

Side Effects and Cautions

- Turmeric is considered safe for most adults.
- High doses or long-term use of turmeric may cause indigestion.
- In animals, high doses of turmeric have caused liver problems. No cases of liver problems have been reported in people.
- People with gallbladder disease should avoid using turmeric as a , as it may worsen the condition.
- Tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

Sources

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- Turmeric (*Curcuma longa* Linn.) and curcumin. Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed on December 28, 2006.
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For More Information

- [Using Dietary Supplements Wisely](#)

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Turmeric Listing: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/patient-turmeric.html

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