

Curcumin: The All in One Solution for Health (Part 2)

Last week, we looked at the amazing healing ability of curcumin on cancer, heart disease, and arthritis. In this week's *Terry Talks Nutrition*[®], we'll explore the ways curcumin is effective for diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, depression, IBS, and more!

Diabetes

While diabetes is a disorder of blood sugar metabolism, inflammation plays a very strong role in its development and progression. Some researchers now believe that chronic, low-level inflammation, especially when associated with obesity, is actually the cause of insulin resistance leading to Type 2 diabetes. In an experimental model of diabetes, curcumin was compared to the drug rosiglitazone (Avandia[®]), and found to be equally as effective in reducing insulin resistance, inflammatory markers, and fats in the bloodstream.¹⁷ Other studies looking at the effects of curcumin in models of diabetes have found similar results: improved insulin response and reduced blood glucose levels.^{18,19} Additionally, scientific studies have found that curcumin may protect against other problems associated with diabetes, such as the breakdown of eye tissue, potential brain damage, nerve pain (neuropathy), and heart disease.²⁰⁻²³

Alzheimer's Disease

The cause of Alzheimer's disease (AD) is not entirely known. However, certain characteristic changes are found in the brains of people with this condition—accumulated clusters of a protein called beta-amyloid, and clumps of dead and dying nerve and brain cells. These clusters and clumps, called plaques and tangles, are believed to interfere with the proper transmission of messages between brain cells and lead to the death of brain cells as well. Inflammation is also believed to be involved, causing the accumulation of plaques and tangles to have even more damaging effects. Because of the known anti-inflammatory effects of curcumin, researchers are now looking at its effects in treating AD.

What they have discovered is astonishing. Not only does curcumin protect brain cells from damaging inflammation, in experimental models of AD, curcumin was able to reduce beta-amyloid levels and **shrink the size of accumulated plaques by over 30%**!²⁴ In fact,

curcumin is more effective in inhibiting formation of beta-amyloid protein fragments than many other drugs being tested as Alzheimer's treatments. One of the most prestigious Alzheimer's research institutes in the world, the McCusker Alzheimer's Research Foundation (supporting research at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia) is focused on learning more about the benefits of curcumin for treating AD.

Depression

Depression is a debilitating and difficult to treat disease. Approximately 30% of patients who take prescription drugs to relieve their depression experience no benefits, and the remaining 70% will have only partial improvement. Additionally, the side effects can be significant, including nausea, weight gain, dizziness, dry mouth, blurred vision, insomnia and more. Because curcumin has been shown to be effective at treating other brain disorders, researchers theorize that it may also be helpful in relieving depression.

First, inflammation is known to play a major role in the development of depression. Therefore, it seems logical that the anti-inflammatory properties of curcumin may be helpful. Second, curcumin is also able to modulate the levels of brain neurotransmitters (chemical messengers—serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine) that influence mood, behavior, appetite, emotions and even dreaming and memory. In experimental models of depression, curcumin has been shown to increase levels of the "feel good" neurotransmitter, serotonin, as well as relieve other symptoms of depression.^{26,27} In a published study comparing BCM-95[®] curcumin to two prescription drugs, fluoxetine (Prozac[®]) and imipramine (Tofranil[®]), an experimental model found this curcumin to be just as effective as the two drugs—but without the adverse side effects.²⁸

In a clinical study, patients with major depressive disorder (MDD) showed the highest response using a combination of fluoxetine (Prozac[®]) **and** high-absorption curcumin enhanced with turmeric essential oil—a 77.8% response rate as measured by the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAMD-17).²⁹

Interestingly, the single-therapy groups scored almost exactly the same, with

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Nutrition

Terry's Bottom Line

If I could only take one thing to improve my health, it would be curcumin. In 45 years of studying health-related research, I have not seen anything that can match the benefits of this powerful, natural medicine. This amazing botanical can be used to treat almost every disease or illness, including:

- Cancer
- Heart Disease
- Bronchitis and Asthma
- Depression
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Rheumatoid Arthritis & Osteoarthritis
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Diabetes
- Leukemia
- Cirrhosis
- Psoriasis
- Wounds
- Fatigue

I highly recommend choosing a product that features a curcumin with excellent absorption that has been proven in published human studies. The best form I have ever found uses curcumin blended with turmeric essential oil. This curcumin has been shown in published human studies to be better absorbed than standard curcumin.

Most studies used a 750 mg dosage twice daily. Most experts recommend taking a minimum of 750 mg of curcumin containing 500 mg of curcuminoids.

More...

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fluoxetine at 64.7% and curcumin at 62.5%—numbers so close that the difference is not statistically significant from one another.²⁹

Two important takeaways from this study: first, curcumin worked as well as the prescription drug fluoxetine in terms of the measurable changes in the HAMD-17 score from baseline to six weeks of treatment; second, curcumin can be an effective and safe treatment for patients with MDD *without* the terrible side effects of suicidal thoughts or other psychological disorders.

In a placebo-controlled study, high-absorption curcumin enhanced with turmeric essential oil showed antidepressant effects in people with major depressive disorder 4 to 8 weeks after treatment.³⁰ Related research investigated the reasons *why* this occurred. It seems that curcumin influences biomarkers associated with depression and reduces their effects.³¹

Gastrointestinal Inflammation (IBD and IBS)

Chronic inflammation of the intestines (the gastrointestinal tract) is associated with several commonly experienced diseases—particularly irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and Crohn's disease. Bloating, frequent diarrhea or constipation, gas, abdominal pain, even heartburn and acid reflux, can all be signs that unchecked inflammation is affecting the proper function of your digestive system. A study including over 200 people with IBS found that use of a standardized extract of curcumin was associated with up to a 25% reduction in abdominal pain, and two-thirds of participants reported an improvement in overall symptoms.³² In a small pilot study of patients with Crohn's disease or ulcerative proctitis (a type of IBD) who received curcumin along with the standard anti-inflammatory drugs (including steroids), many of the patients were able to reduce or stop the medications, and inflammation markers decreased to within normal limits.³³ One of the interesting benefits of curcumin is that it has not only been shown to reduce inflammatory compounds in the intestines, it can actually strengthen the intestinal wall to prevent harmful bacteria from passing out of the intestines and reaching other organs, such as the liver and kidneys.³⁴

Wound Healing and Skin Conditions

Curcumin not only protects skin with its ability to quench damaging free radicals and reduce inflammation, but it has also been shown to improve collagen deposition and vascular density in wounds. Collagen is the foundation upon which healthy skin is built; vascular density is what ensures adequate blood flow to carry in the nutrients needed for repair of damaged tissue.³⁵ Many people who experience problems with slow healing of wounds also have diabetes. Diabetes interferes with wound healing because it causes reduced blood flow (nutrients needed for tissue repair are carried in the bloodstream). High blood sugar also interferes with the ability of the body to clear away damaged cells and build new skin cells. In an experimental model of diabetes, both oral and topical curcumin were able to speed wound repair and healing.³⁶ Radiation treatment for cancer can also cause significant damage to the skin and delay healing. Pretreatment with curcumin has been shown in multiple studies to speed skin repair and healing.³⁷ And finally, curcumin has shown promise at reducing inflammatory skin conditions such as psoriasis and eczema, as well as skin cancer.³⁵

Other Chronic Diseases

Curcumin has also shown promise in treating many other diseases and conditions, including obesity, kidney and liver disease, eye disorders, lung conditions, allergies, pancreatitis, and more.^{38,39} Curcumin may be able to protect against weight gain and body fat accumulation. In a study of animals fed a high fat diet, curcumin supplementation prevented the increase of adipose (fat) tissue as well as preventing fat deposits in the liver.⁴⁰

Curcumin Safety

No toxicity issues have been reported for curcumin, even when used in dosages as high as 10 grams or more daily.^{41,42} Because it is so safe and non-toxic, curcumin therapy is something to consider for almost any condition, especially conditions involving inflammation.

Powerful Natural Medicine

I hope this information has helped show you why I think curcumin is the most powerful natural medicine available. No matter what your health concern might be, curcumin can help. Remember that when you shop for a curcumin product for yourself or your

loved ones, choose a product that features a curcumin with excellent absorption that has been proven in published human studies.

The information provided here is meant to be used in conjunction with the advice of a healthcare practitioner, who can help develop a treatment plan that is designed to address your unique health concerns for an optimal outcome.

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When in doubt, always consult your physician or healthcare practitioner. This article is intended to provide you with information to maintain your health.