

Treat Your High Cholesterol and Clogged Arteries Naturally with Curcumin: Research

By: David Gutierrez, Natural News

The humble spice that gives curry powder its characteristic yellow color may hold the key to helping people lower their cholesterol and fight heart disease naturally, research suggests.

The spice in question, turmeric, has a long history of use as a traditional medicine across Asia. In recent years, Western scientists have conducted numerous studies on turmeric and the trio of yellow pigments that it contains known as curcuminoids. The curcuminoids (sometimes simply called "curcumin," after the most famous of the three) are antioxidant polyphenols known to function as potent anti-inflammatory.

According to a study published in the journal *Atherosclerosis* in 2004, turmeric extract may reduce the susceptibility of LDL ("bad") cholesterol to oxidation, an important step in the development of atherosclerosis and heart disease. Turmeric extract also reduced overall LDL and total cholesterol levels. Notably, the study found the most benefit to turmeric extract at a lower rather than a higher dose.

Another, more comprehensive, study was conducted by French researchers in 2008, presented at the *American Heart Association's* Basic Cardiovascular Sciences Annual Conference in 2009 and published in the journal *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research* in 2012. Mice predisposed to develop atherosclerosis were fed either a control diet or the same diet plus curcumin supplements for four months. At the end of this time, researchers found 26 percent fewer fatty artery deposits in the mice fed the curcumin-enhanced diet. Fewer atherosclerotic lesions were seen in these mice. In addition, the researchers found that curcumin seemed to actually change the expression of genes related to plaque buildup in arteries.

Turmeric outperforms cholesterol-lowering drugs?

Another study on mice predisposed to heart disease was conducted by researchers from Kyungpook National University in South Korea and published in the journal *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research* in 2011. In this study, the mice were fed a high cholesterol diet that was supplemented either with curcumin, the cholesterol-lowering drug lovastatin or a placebo. After 18 weeks, the researchers found that just like lovastatin, curcumin lowered blood levels of cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL cholesterol, while increasing levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol. It also led to changes in gene expression that could be expected to reduce the risk of artery damage and heart disease.

"Long-term curcumin treatment lowers plasma and hepatic cholesterol and suppresses early atherosclerotic lesions comparable to the protective effects of lovastatin," the researchers concluded. "The anti-atherogenic effect of curcumin is mediated via multiple mechanisms including altered lipid, cholesterol and immune gene expression."

Turmeric for your heart and health

Lowering cholesterol and fighting arterial disease are not the only ways that turmeric improves the health of your heart, or of your body as a whole. In a trio of studies published between June and October 2012, researchers from the *University of Tsukuba* in Japan found that curcumin supplements improved two measures of heart health (vascular endothelial function and arterial compliance) as much as an aerobic exercise program, while a combination of the two lead to even more dramatic benefits. A combination of curcumin and exercise was also found to significantly slow age-related degeneration in the heart.

Studies have also suggested that turmeric and curcumin can help fight infection, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, and numerous forms of cancer.

The body absorbs curcumin best from turmeric root (which is more commonly consumed in the West ground up, as a spice), rather than from supplements. As seen in the 2004 study, evidence suggests that the greatest health benefit comes from consuming curcumin and other "nutraceuticals" at low doses over a long period of time, rather than from short-term, high dosage schedules.

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.vitasearch.com/get-clp-summary/40414>

http://www.naturalnews.com/040330_turmeric_heart_health_curcumin.html