Last week, we looked at the amazing healing ability of curcumin on cancer, heart disease, and arthritis. In this week’s Terry Talk’s 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. In fact, 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.13 Other studies looking at the effects of curcumin in models of diabetes have found similar results: improved insulin response and reduced blood glucose levels.14,15 Additionally, scientific studies have found that curcumin may protect against other problems associated with diabetes, such as breakdown of eye tissue, potential brain damage, nerve pain (neuropathy), and heart disease.16-19

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 normal transmission of messages between brain cells and the death of the cells themselves. 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%!20 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. In a ground-breaking new study, BCM-95® curcumin is being administered to patients with mild to moderate dementia in order to learn more about how curcumin can be used as an effective treatment of AD.21

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, it has been theorized 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) which 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.22,23

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...
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just as effective as the two drugs—but without the adverse side effects.24 Researchers are now conducting human trials to compare the anti-inflammatory effects of curcumin with prescription drugs such as fluoxetine (one branded product is known as Prozac®).25

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 2/3 of participants reported an improvement in overall symptoms.26 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-inflammation drugs, both oral and topical curcumin were able to speed wound repair and healing.27 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.28 And finally, curcumin has also been shown to be effective at reducing inflammatory skin conditions such as psoriasis and eczema, as well as skin cancer.29

Other Chronic Diseases

Curcumin has shown promise in treating many other diseases and conditions, including obesity, kidney and liver disease, eye disorders, lung conditions, allergies, pancreatitis, and more.23-25 Curcumin may also 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.26

Curcumin Safety

No toxicity issues have been reported for curcumin, even when used in dosages as high as 10 grams or more daily.25,36 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.

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