

## Turmeric

This fact sheet provides basic information about the herb 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 Name**—*Curcuma longa*

### What It Is Used For

- In traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic medicine, 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 It 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 dietary supplement, 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

Turmeric. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturaldatabase.com> on December 27, 2006.

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa* Linn.) and curcumin. Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturalstandard.com> on December 28, 2006.

Turmeric root. In: Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckman J, eds. *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Newton, MA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2000:379-384.

## For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) and view:

- *What's in the Bottle? An Introduction to Dietary Supplements* at [nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/)
- *Herbal Supplements: Consider Safety, Too* at [nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/)

## NCCAM Clearinghouse

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

E-mail: [info@nccam.nih.gov](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

## CAM on PubMed

Web site: [nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/](http://nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/)

## NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: [www.ods.od.nih.gov](http://www.ods.od.nih.gov)

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