

Turmeric

—

Curcuma longa

some important highlights compiled by

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Disclaimer

The information is for educational purposes only and has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration.

I do not practice medicine and my work is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent diseases.



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

- Turmeric's native habitat is South & Southeast Asia
 - keep this in mind with regards to sustainability and transportation distance.
- Humans in this part of the world have worked with Turmeric as food and medicine for thousands of years.
- Traditional ways of working with Turmeric:
 - Cooking
 - Drink – 'Golden Milk'
 - Always look to the traditional ways of working with a plant. Key takeaways for us:
 - never consumed just by itself, but always as part of a dish
 - always the whole root (and not isolated constituents)
 - always prepared and consumed with fat (traditionally cow's milk and ghee = animal fat)



My general herbal mantra:

Herbs are not solutions to swallow.

*Work **with** herbs, don't **use** them.*

Engage with herbs as fellow complex living beings and not as supplements.

Learn as much as you can about a plant you want to work with/consume.

Knowledgeable and thoughtful sourcing is key – it matters if the land, plants, and humans involved in growing, harvesting and manufacturing have been treated respectfully and with care!

Ask me for my herbal product buying guide.



Source: Herbal Academy



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

- Work with Turmeric in your kitchen: in soups and stews, milks, fire cider, sprinkled on your café latte or cappuccino.
- Concentrated extracts as tinctures or capsules have a place, but not as a daily prophylactic because ‘it’s supposed to be good for you.’
- Turmeric on a daily basis and long-term acts warming and drying on the tissues – see traditional use = with fat
- If you’re in the menopause transition and are challenged by excessive tissue dryness and heat, you can occasionally work with Turmeric if it makes sense and certainly also consume it as food, but balance and nuance is key.
- I almost always prefer Turmeric as part of an herbal formula with other herbs rather than alone.



Source: Neem Tree Farms

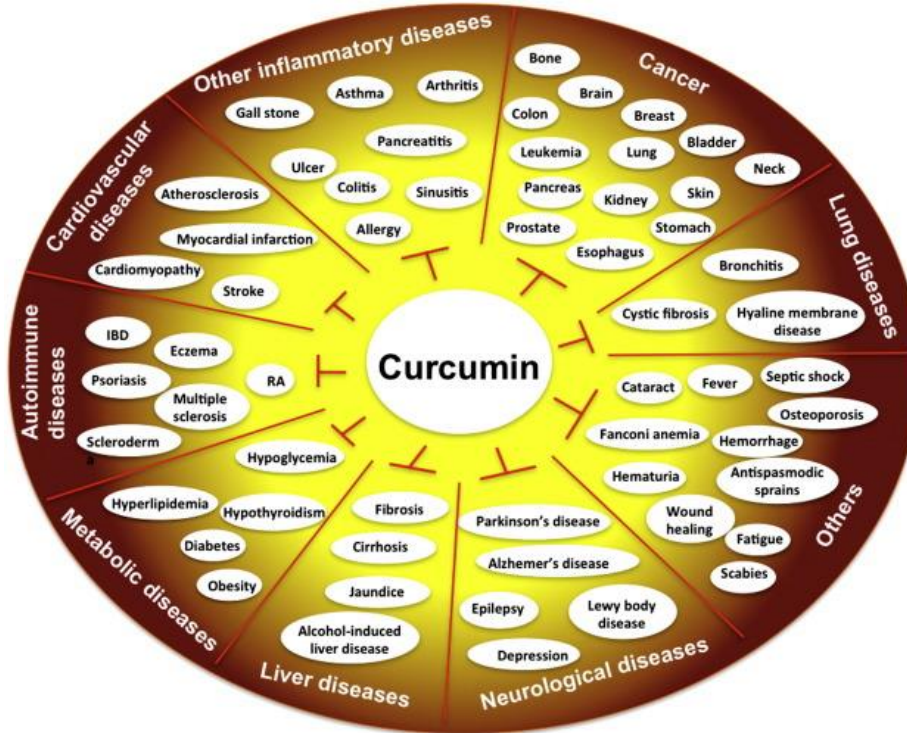


Source: Herbal Academy

- **Curcumin is not the same as Turmeric!**
- Curcumin is just one of the many many phytochemicals (= plant constituents) that are found in Turmeric.
- Taking an isolated constituent like Curcumin by itself is not the same as working with an extract from the whole plant rhizome. You are missing out on the beneficial synergy and buffering effects the various plant constituents have on each other as they engage with your body's cells and tissues.
- In extreme situations (like cancer) Curcumin alone can make sense (depending on the individual person and situation), but ideally still together with additional whole plant Turmeric.



Turmeric is a well-researched medicinal plant – though the scientific focus is mostly on Curmcumin alone



Prasad, S., Gupta, S. C., Tyagi, A. K., & Aggarwal, B. B. (2014). Curcumin, a component of golden spice: from bedside to bench and back. *Biotechnology advances*, 32(6), 1053–1064.



Source: Herbal Academy

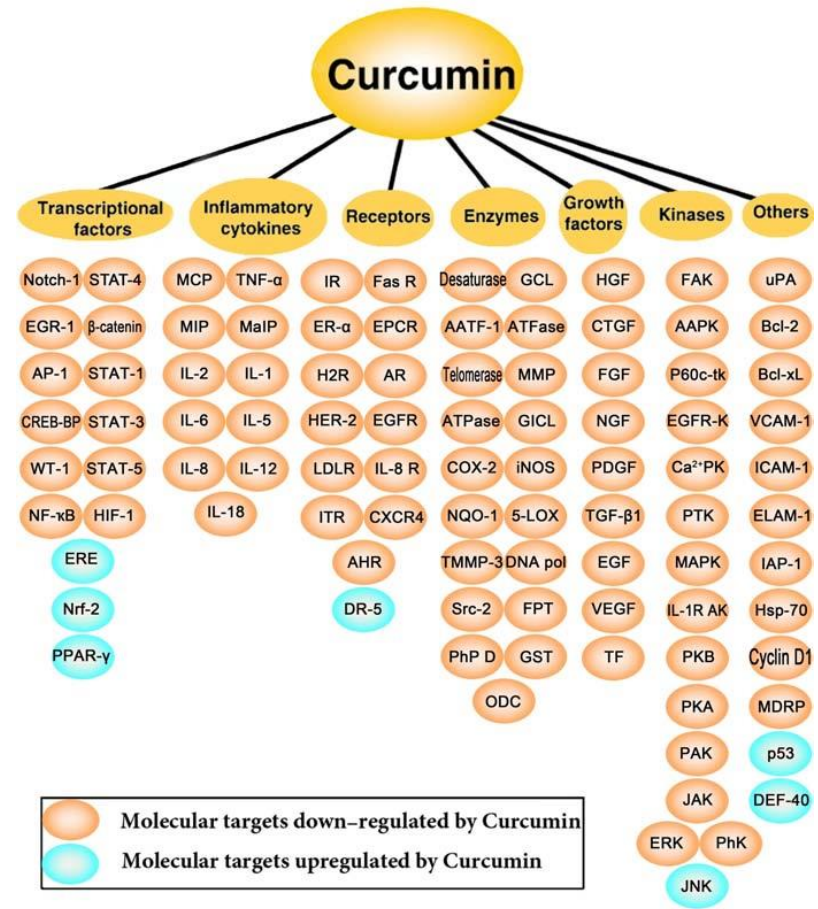


Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

Summary of molecular targets of Curcumin in the human body:



Noorafshan, Ali & Ashkani Esfahani, Soheil. (2012). A Review of Therapeutic Effects of Curcumin. Current pharmaceutical design. 19. 10.2174/1381612811319110006.



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

So, what about:

“I heard Turmeric helps prevent neurodegenerative disorders.”

“I heard Turmeric is good for inflammation and pain.”

“I heard Turmeric is anti-cancer.”

???

YES, AND – that does not mean the general and sound recommendation is to swallow Turmeric capsules or tincture on a daily basis.



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

“I heard Turmeric should be taken with Black Pepper to increase absorption.”

This is an interesting one.

Yes, I’ve many times been taught as well to look at the clinical lab science that clearly shows how consuming Turmeric together with Black Pepper increases absorption.

Many Turmeric products include Black Pepper for said reason.

My thoughts: plants and humans evolved together and the way our cells and enzymatic pathways interact with the plant molecules is not random, but a result of fine-tuned co-evolution. So, I’m wondering, maybe the ‘low absorption’ of Turmeric is exactly as Nature intended and thus not low but just right to keep our physiology safe (see my thoughts re liver injury). *I have no scientific evidence to back this theory– I hope someone will look into this at some point.*

[Here is a small study](#) that found Turmeric without added Pepper worked similarly well with regards to pain reduction.



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

More on absorption

Remember a few slides early I mentioned how traditionally Turmeric has always been consumed as part of a nutritious dish or drink, which also contains healthy fats.

- Fat aids with absorption of the curcuminoids and other fat-soluble Turmeric constituents via the gut into the blood stream.

Black Pepper does not increase absorption the same way as fat. Much rather, the spice slows down the breakdown of Turmeric constituents in the liver and thus keeps them circulating in the bloodstream significantly longer.

My thoughts: Cooking and eating a nourishing dish with Turmeric, fat, and Black Pepper is the way our bodies have learned to interact with the plants and their biochemicals.

On the other hand, putting this all together concentrated in a capsule and market it as 'highly bioavailable' may not necessarily be well tolerated by everyone.



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

Does Turmeric cause liver injury? – part 1

Short answer: No.

Turmeric has been consumed safely by humans for thousands of years.

Longer and more nuanced answer:

- Yes, there are a number case reports of liver injury where Turmeric **products** (mostly capsules) were consumed. Though other contributing factors are missing from the reports or are unclear.
- Health Canada now requires precautionary label statements for Turmeric and Curcuminoid products (not for Turmeric that you buy as the whole rhizome in the veggie aisle).

BUT

The American Botanical Council (ABC) summarizes:

There is no evidence for a causal relationship between Turmeric and Curcuminoid products and liver toxicity in general.



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

Does Turmeric cause liver injury? – part 2

So, what can cause someone's liver values to become elevated after taking a Turmeric or Curcumin product regularly for a longer time?

Some possible reasons:

- Idiosyncratic reaction = an adverse reaction that does not occur in most people. (Think of allergic reactions to certain drugs like antibiotics that some people have, while most people don't have these reactions). Genetic associations have been found.
- Adulterated Turmeric and/or Curcumin products. High popularity of an herb (like Turmeric) unfortunately means higher likelihood of adulteration with lower-cost products. Common Turmeric product adulterations: synthetic dyes like lead chromate, metanil yellow, and acid orange 7. (source: ABC – American Botanical Council)
- Inappropriate use of Turmeric/ Curcumin products and unknown product complexity variability.



Source: Neem Tree Farms



Source: Herbal Academy

Bottom Line

- Turmeric is a wonderful plant ally! Work with her respectfully.
- Enjoy Turmeric as kitchen medicine – by far the best and safest way!
 - cooking with the fresh (organic) rhizome, golden milk (make it from fresh roots), fire cider for your fall/winter immune support pantry.
- Take Turmeric in capsule or extract form when it makes sense and if there is a reason – work with a trained herbalist for indication, dosage, length of use and safe sourcing. You can also learn to make your own.
- Know where & what to buy! Hint: not the grocery store aisle and not from the popular social media MDs (I had an interesting and eye-opening email exchange with the product marketing team of THE social media menopause MD, who sells expensive Turmeric, hormones, collagen, weighted vests, books, ...)
- Ask me for my herbal sourcing list & when in doubt, stick to the member and donor companies of the Sustainable Herb Initiative:

<https://www.sustainableherbsinitiative.org/donors/>



Thank you for reading!

Please reach out if you'd like to learn more, have questions etc.

Aside from 1:1 client work, you can book me for talks or small group presentations and hands-on-learning.



Source: Herbal Academy