



Turmeric's Therapeutic Properties

by Walter Filkins

There is mounting evidence that turmeric, ginger and other spices have therapeutic effects. In the U.S., medical claims can only be made if there is a scientifically significant causal relationship where one chemical compound, measurable in the human blood, causes a specific symptom to go away, despite causing other symptoms to appear.

The problem with this “western” approach to medicine is that naturally occurring foods and spices have hundreds of nutrients and chemical compounds, which absorb into the body at varying rates. These compounds are rarely measurable in the blood and it’s almost impossible to attribute a health effect to

one specific compound unless a drug is extracted and dosed in an amount far exceeding what one would get from normal consumption of the food or spice.

At Jahmu PBC, a North Kingstown based turmeric-ginger chai tea startup, founder Jessica Filkins worries that many Americans are being shortchanged by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). While on a trip to Southeast Asia and Indonesia, Filkins drank “jamu”, a yellow elixir made from blending turmeric, ginger and other ingredients, and when her myriad of health problems that doctors had told her were untreatable improved, including irritable bowel syndrome,

Filkins was convinced of the therapeutic properties of turmeric.

When consumed alone or in a raw form, these roots taste spicy and bitter. To be palatable, turmeric and ginger require some combination of peeling, grating, pickling, blending or cooking. According to Filkins, powdered forms are, as it turns out, an equally beneficial substitute for the raw roots. One ounce of powdered turmeric has the nutrient content of a pound of raw turmeric. In particular, powdered turmeric contains upwards of 5 percent curcumin, an active constituent in turmeric that has powerful anti-inflammatory effects and is a strong antioxidant.

Turmeric is used for arthritis, heartburn (dyspepsia), stomach pain, diarrhea, intestinal gas, stomach bloating, loss of appetite, jaundice, liver problems and gallbladder disorders. It is also used for headaches, bronchitis, colds, lung infections, fibromyalgia, fever and menstrual problems. Other uses include depression, Alzheimer’s disease, water retention, worms and kidney problems.

A welcomed replacement for cinnamon or curry, a significant amount of turmeric and ginger can be casually incorporated into one’s diet by drinking tea blends or adding these spices to smoothies, hot cider, sparkling cider and milk, or by incorporating into recipes ranging from apple crisp topping to soup.

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