



Willow Moon Herbals

Turmeric

Latin binomial: *Curcuma longa* L.

Description: A relative of ginger, turmeric is a large-leaved, aromatic plant. Turmeric is available as a spice, either in powder form or in the produce section as whole fresh rhizomes. The rhizomes are boiled for several hours and then dried in hot ovens, after which they are ground into a deep orange-yellow powder commonly used as a spice in curries and other South Asian and Middle Eastern cuisine, for dyeing, and to impart color to mustard condiments. Its active ingredient is curcumin and it has a distinctly earthy, slightly bitter, slightly hot peppery flavor and a mustardy smell.



Uses: Consider turmeric if you have an inflammatory condition like arthritis, pain after injury, gallbladder inflammation, liver inflammation (associated with hepatitis), or for menstrual pain. Some studies suggest that turmeric can help protect against cancer. One compound in turmeric ~ curcumin ~ inhibits the synthesis of substances called prostaglandins in the body that are involved in pain by the mechanism similar to the one involved in the pain-relieving action of aspirin and ibuprofen, only weaker. Still, at high doses, curcumin stimulates the adrenal glands to release the body's own cortisone, a potent reliever of inflammation and the pain it often causes.

Caution: Avoid use of this herb during pregnancy. Don't use turmeric if you have an obstructed bile duct, gallstones, stomach ulcers, or hyperacidity, without the advice of an experienced herbalist.

Sources: Herbal Remedies for Dummies (C. Hobbs); Herbal Rituals (J. Berger); A Modern Herbal (Mrs. M. Grieve)

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