

# TURMERIC

**Common Names:** *curcumin*, *curcuminoids*, *turmeric root*

**Scientific Names:** *curcuma longa*, *curcuma domestica*

**Effectiveness:** Turmeric may modestly improve pain in knee osteoarthritis.

**Safety:** Likely safe when used orally and topically in appropriate amounts for up to 8 months.

## What is turmeric?

- Turmeric is a spice that comes from the turmeric root. It is used to flavour and colour some curry powders, mustards, butters, and cheeses. Curcumin is a yellow pigment used in food colouring. It is one of the major active ingredients from the turmeric root called curcuminoids.

## What is it used for in people with rheumatic conditions?

- Turmeric has been used for the management of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis to reduce joint pain and improve function.

## How is it thought to work?

- The active part of turmeric, curcumin, has been shown to reduce inflammation and act as an antioxidant.

## Does it Work? What the Science Says:

Osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis 500 mg 2–4 times daily:

- Limited research suggests that turmeric extract may be modestly effective in reducing pain and improving functionality in patients with OA and RA after 6 – 8 weeks of treatment.

- A small study showed a commercial formulation of turmeric (Meriva®) used at 500 mg twice daily modestly reduced pain and improved functionality in patients with knee OA.
- A four week long randomized control study with 367 patients with knee OA showed that taking turmeric extract 500 mg three times daily demonstrated non-inferiority to ibuprofen 400 mg three times daily for reducing knee pain in OA. Both groups showed clinical improvement on a 10 point WOMAC pain scale (change (percent improvement) from baseline): -2.23 (41.3%) ibuprofen vs -1.94 (36.6%) turmeric. There was similar use of rescue tramadol between groups (2/185 1.1% ibuprofen group vs 5/185 2.7% turmeric group). Patients taking turmeric had less abdominal pain/discomfort than the ibuprofen group, but more loose stools.
  - Lack of reliable evidence to support use of turmeric in RA.
  - Long-term efficacy and safety are unknown.
  - Small, well conducted trial showed turmeric was effective for reducing OA pain with a good safety profile over 4 weeks.

### **What are possible side effects and what can I do about them?**

- Turmeric products are generally well tolerated if taken orally. Common side effects reported include: heartburn, bloating, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting.

### Interactions

#### **With drugs:**

- Turmeric may reduce the amount platelets clump together (platelet aggregation). It may interact with anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs by increasing risk of bruising and/or bleeding. -
  - Common antiplatelet and anticoagulant drugs may include: *warfarin (Coumadin), ASA (Aspirin), and clopidogrel (Plavix), ticagrelor (Brilinta), prasugrel (Effient), enoxaparin (Lovenox), dalteparin (Fragmin), dabigatran (Pradaxa), rivaroxaban (Xarelto), apixaban (Eliquis) and others.*

#### **With Other Diseases:**

- May induce *gallbladder contraction*, which may worsen symptoms and cause abdominal pain in patients with gallbladder or gallstone disease.
- May cause *acid reflux and heartburn*, which may worsen GERD symptoms.

- Has *antiplatelet effects*, which may increase risk of bleeding during surgeries. Stop turmeric at least 2 weeks prior to surgical procedures.

**With other natural health products:**

- Turmeric may reduce the amount platelets clump together (platelet aggregation). It may interact with other natural health products that affect the way platelets clump together (platelet aggregation), increasing the risk of bruising and/or
  - Such as: *garlic, ginger, ginkgo, certain types of ginseng, and red clover, and others.*

*For more information about turmeric, consult your physician and pharmacist.*