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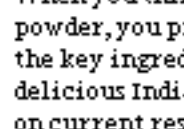
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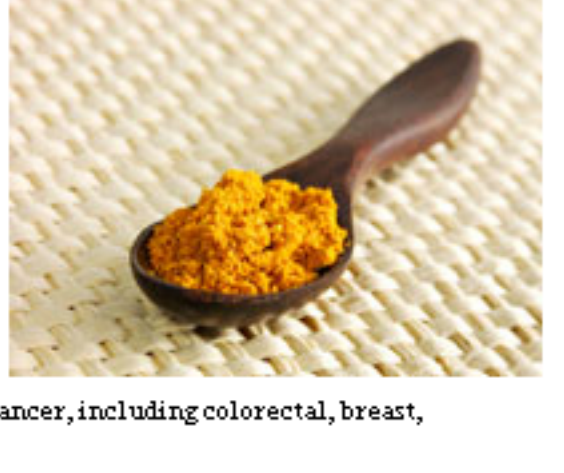
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More Than a Simple Spice: Fighting Cancer with Curry

From: [Nutrition Tidbits - HealthCastle](#)
Friday, July 06, 2007

When you think of curry powder, you probably imagine the key ingredient in a delicious Indian meal. But based on current research, curry powder may be much more than a simple and delicious spice: it's shown to play a role in [cancer prevention](#). Mounting evidence indicates that curry powder's anchor spice, turmeric, contains an active compound shown to prevent the progression of certain types of cancer, including colorectal, breast, melanoma, and prostate.



It may come as a surprise to some that curry powder isn't actually a single spice. It's actually a fragrant blend of several herbs and spices. Like any recipe, thousands of curry powder variations exist, but turmeric is almost always in the mix. It is the brightly colored turmeric that lends the familiar golden color to curry powder, and stains the adventurous chef's wooden spoons a bright hue. Turmeric's active compound, curcumin, is a phytonutrient with [antioxidant](#) properties, and is the focus of a number of cancer studies. Phytonutrients play a critical role in chronic disease prevention since they are known to improve immune function and can reduce the risk for illnesses such as cancer and [heart disease](#).

Slowing Cancer with Old Ideas and New Science

Using turmeric to treat disease isn't a new idea. In fact, turmeric has been used for centuries in the practice of traditional Chinese and Indian medicine to treat a wide variety of health concerns. But Western scientists have only begun to explore the link between cancer and turmeric in recent years. Researchers at the University of Texas Anderson Cancer Center found that in laboratory mice, curcumin arrested the spread of [breast cancer](#) while also reducing the damaging toxic effects of a widely used chemotherapy drug. Other studies suggest that curcumin may be effective in slowing the progression of prostate and colorectal cancers and stopping melanoma growth.

Don't Worry About Curry

With all of this promising research, how can you best reap the benefits of curcumin? While it's too early to make recommendations for curcumin medicinally, it can't hurt to add a few more curry-based dishes to your diet by spicing up recipes with curry powder. Curry powder adds a tasty, distinctive flavor to (literally!) everything from soup to nuts. A simple sauce starring curry powder can lend flavor to a bland baked chicken breast, and roasted butternut squash pureed with a little fat-free yogurt and curry powder is divine. You can prepare a deceptively simple veggie dip using fat-free sour cream and a little curry powder to taste. So crack open your cookbooks and tie on your apron it's easy to punch up the flavor with curry!

The Bottom Line

While the results of early studies on curcumin have been positive, there is not enough conclusive evidence to make a recommendation for curry powder or turmeric intake specifically for the prevention of cancer. Additional studies are planned, so further information will be available in the future. Until then, there's no harm in sneaking in a few more opportunities to cook with curry powder; just be careful that the dishes you choose are low in fat, too.

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