

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

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Turmeric is a plant that's common in South Asia but is grown around the world. The underground part of the stem is a spice that has been used in cooking for hundreds of years. It is used in traditional medicine for many health issues.

Turmeric also comes as a dietary supplement in tablets, capsules and gummies.

The active substance in turmeric is curcumin. Curcumin is a powerful antioxidant. Antioxidants protect your cells from damage. Curcumin can also reduce swelling and pain.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To prevent cancer
- To treat infections
- To reduce inflammation (swelling and redness)
- To treat joint pain

Turmeric also has other uses that haven't been studied by doctors to see if they work.

It's generally safe to use turmeric in food and tea. Talk with your healthcare providers before taking supplements or higher amounts of turmeric. Herbal supplements are stronger than the herbs you would use in cooking.

Turmeric can also interact with some medications and affect how they work. For more information, read the "What else do I need to know?" section below.

What are the side effects?

Side effects of using turmeric may include:

- Abdominal pain/discomfort
- Skin rash
- Hives

What else do I need to know?

- Talk with your healthcare providers about using turmeric and foods that contain turmeric if you're getting chemotherapy. In lab experiments, turmeric stopped some chemotherapy medications from working against breast cancer cells.
- Talk with your healthcare providers about using turmeric and foods that contain turmeric if you have a family history of kidney stones. Taking turmeric supplements may put you at a higher risk of getting kidney stones.

Don't take turmeric supplements if:

- You're taking aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), or Acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Turmeric may lessen the effects of these medications.
- You're taking indomethacin (Indocin®). Turmeric may lessen its effects.
- You're taking warfarin (Coumadin®) or other blood thinners. Turmeric may increase your risk of bleeding.
- You're taking chemotherapy medications such as camptothecin (Camptosar®), mechlorethamine (Mustargen®), doxorubicin (Adriamycin®, Rubex®), or cyclophosphamide (Cytoxan®, Neosar®). Turmeric may lessen the effects of these medications.
- You're taking tacrolimus (Prograf®). Curcumin supplements may increase side effects.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Turmeric - Last updated on March 11, 2024

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