

Turmeric—Nature’s Gold

By Janie Atwood, OSU Moore Family Center Fellow
Sep 2022



Turmeric is a popular spice commonly used in Indian, Thai, and Moroccan foods, but could be used more widely since it has numerous health benefits. The powerful compound in turmeric known as curcumin (ker-KEU-man), is known to fight inflammation, a common precursor to cancer, which is the number one killer of Coos County residents. Along with its anti-inflammatory properties, turmeric is also a powerful antioxidant that protects against cell damage associated with chronic disease.

Many studies have found that turmeric has cancer-fighting properties. Clinical trials on cancer patients have shown that curcumin can enhance the effectiveness of chemotherapy. Other research has shown that curcumin can kill certain cancer cells.

Turmeric has been shown to increase absorption of beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant found in plant foods that gives them their yellow, orange, red or green color. For this reason, it is a good idea to add turmeric to roasted veggies like carrots, sweet potatoes, or peppers, or sprinkle on green salads. Adding a dash of black pepper has been shown to improve the absorption of the active ingredient in turmeric.

Contrary to some beliefs, turmeric is not spicy. In fact, it goes well with both sweet and savory dishes. Due to its vibrant color and mild peppery flavor, it is commonly used in curry powders, mustards, and cheeses.



Photo credit: mydesiredhome.com

Turmeric root looks like ginger root, except it is smaller, less knobby, and has an orange tint to it. Turmeric is also sold ground into powder and can be found in the spice section of most grocery stores.

With its powerful anti-inflammatory properties, it is no wonder why turmeric has become such a popular spice around the world. Add turmeric to roasted veggies, smoothies and baked goods. Don't forget to add a dash of black pepper to boost absorption!

You may want to try this soothing evening drink, **golden milk** (see recipe on next page).



Photo credit: thespruceeats.com

The best way to get turmeric in your diet is through whole foods rather than ground spice or supplements. Turmeric root (whole food) can be found at most grocery stores next to the ginger root in the produce section.

Golden Milk

Adapted from foolproofliving.com

Prep time: 5 min

Cook time: 5 min

Servings: 2 cups

Health Benefits of Golden Milk

Golden Milk is a creamy hot drink made with spices including turmeric which gives the milk its golden color. Turmeric helps to reduce inflammation and decrease joint pain. Due to its anti-bacterial properties, turmeric can help boost the immune system.

Both turmeric and ginger can aid in digestion. Adding just a pinch of black pepper helps absorb the anti-inflammatory compounds.

Ingredients

2 ½ cups unsweetened oat milk (almond, soy or other plant-based milk are options)

1 ½ tsp ground *or* 2" fresh turmeric root, sliced

1-inch fresh ginger root, sliced, *or* ½ tsp ground

1 Tbsp coconut oil (optional)

1 Tbsp maple syrup or honey (optional)

Pinch of black pepper

Try adding other spices like cinnamon, star anise or cardamom pods



Photo credit: cookwithmanali.com

Directions

1. Place all ingredients in a saucepan and use a whisk to mix.
2. Heat beverage over low heat and continue to whisk until smooth and just starting to simmer.
3. Serve in a mug or small bowl. Sprinkle with cinnamon if desired and enjoy!
4. Golden Milk is great to warm up a chilly day or right before bed.