

Phytochemistry and Phytochemical Potential of Curcuma longa: A Narrative Review

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Abstract: Since the beginning of recorded history, Curcuma longa has been valued for its medicinal benefits as a root crop. Turmeric's phytochemicals, which include curcuminoids, essential oils, and other bioactive substances, are principally responsible for its therapeutic effects. The Phytochemistry of Curcuma longa is described in this narrative review, with special attention paid to the major classes of phytochemicals and their potential for medicinal use. The therapeutic properties of the curcuminoids, particularly curcumin, as well as their potential to prevent and cure a variety of chronic disorders have all been thoroughly investigated. Turmeric possesses a variety of bioactive chemicals, which include turmerones and polysaccharides, which have shown to have important pharmacological effects, such as antibacterial, anticancer, and hepatoprotective properties. The antibacterial and antifungal qualities of turmeric's essential oils have also been proved. Promising results have been found in studies looking at the phytochemical potential of Curcuma longa, and investigations into its medicinal uses are still ongoing. The objective of this study is to give a thorough review of what is currently known regarding the Phytochemistry & therapeutic potential of this valuable plant.

Key words: Turmeric, Curcuma longa, Phytochemistry, Bioactive compounds, Medicinal uses



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The Zingiberaceae family includes the flowering plant turmeric (*Curcuma longa*). Since the beginning of time, turmeric has played a significant role in Asian medicine, including Unani Medicine, Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Siddha, & the animistic ceremonies of Austronesian Peoples [1]. *Curcuma longa* is a widely used spice around the world, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. Temperate climates are ideal for growing and it requires a lot of rain every year [2, 3, 4]. The rhizomes of the plant are usually consumed fresh or boiled in water as well as dried before being crushed into a deep orange-yellow powder that is frequently utilised as a colouring and even flavouring agent in many Asian culinary styles, particularly curries, as well as for dyeing [2,5,6,7]. The smell and aroma of turmeric powder are similar to black pepper and have an earthy, mustard-like aroma. India and Thailand have the highest diversity of *Curcuma* species, while other tropical Asian nations also have a variety of wild *Curcuma* species [5,8,9, 10].

Only specimens from South India were classified as *Curcuma longa*, according to recent research, which found problems with the species' classification. The phylogeny, linkages, intraspecific & interspecific variation, as well as more species and cultivars in other regions of the world must yet be determined & authenticated [11]. It has been discovered that various species sold as turmeric around the world actually belong to several apparently identical taxa with similar local names. Particularly in poorer nations, traditional medical practises are the largest source of primary care physicians. According to the WHO, traditional medicine provides healthcare to over 80% of population all over the globe [12]. As developed nations view medicinal herbs as secure substitutes for conventional medications, the use of natural product cures is growing [13].

This study thoroughly assessed scientific investigations and included the most recent data on the pharmacological properties, bioactive components, and ethnomedicinal applications of *C. longa*. In-depth research is required to understand the mechanisms, effectiveness, safe dosages, & commercialization of turmeric to treat a variety of human & animal disorders, as well as other scientific gaps in current understanding that are highlighted by this work.

Global distribution of *Curcuma longa*

It is a South Asian native, and due to its many pharmacological qualities, it has been extensively utilised for many years in traditional medicine. Today, turmeric is utilised both as a spice and for its healing properties. Many nations, particularly in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, plant and use a lot of turmeric. Turmeric is mostly produced and used in India, with Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia following. Turmeric is also grown in China, Japan, Korea, and Australia, in addition to these nations [14]. Due to its numerous health advantages, turmeric has recently experienced tremendous growth in popularity in the West, which has raised demand for the spice.

Botanical description

A perennial herbaceous plant, turmeric can reach a height of 1 m. The rhizomes are branching, fragrant, cylindrical, and bright to orange. The leaves are alternately arranged in two rows. The three components of a leaf are the petiole, the leaf blade, and the leaf sheath. The leaf sheaths serve as a phoney stem. The petiole can be between 50 and 115 centimetres long. Simple leaf blades can be as long as 230 cm [8,9,11,15,16], although most are between 76 and 115 cm long. They are oblong to elliptical in shape and 38 to 45 cm wide, narrowing towards the tip. Stem bracts with tapered upper ends vary in hue from white to green and can have a reddish-purple tint at the top of the inflorescence. Hermaphrodites have three-fold, zygomorphic blooms. The three calyx teeth are not evenly spaced, and the three sepals are white, joined, and covered in fluffy hairs. A 3-centimeter-long corolla tube is formed from the union of the three vibrant yellow petals. The three triangular corolla lobes, which range in length from 1.0 to 1.5 cm [8,9,11,15,16], have soft-spiny top tips.

Morphology of *Curcuma longa*

The dust bag's base is spurred. Staminodes are created from the remaining stamens. Outside staminodes are shorter than inside staminodes. The obovate labellum is yellowish in colour, is 1.2 to 2.0 cm in length, and has a yellow ribbon in the centre [11, 16]. The bracts are 3 to 5 cm long and light green in colour, elliptical to oblong in shape, and have a blunt top end [11, 16]. When the fruit capsule is opened, three portions are visible. August is often the beginning of East Asia's blooming season. The fake stem ends in an inflorescence stalk that is 12 to 20 cm long and covered in many blooms [11, 16]. These bracts are light green in colour, 3 to 5 cm long, elliptical to oblong in shape, and have a blunt top end [11, 16].

Chemical composition of *curcuma longa*

Quite a few different bioactive substances, including curcuminoids, essential oils, and polysaccharides, can be found in *Curcuma longa*'s chemical composition.

The yellow colour of the rhizomes is caused by a class of polyphenolic chemicals called curcuminoids, which also have a number of biological functions. Curcumin, bisdemethoxycurcumin and demethoxycurcumin, are the three main curcuminoids found in *Curcuma longa*. The curcumin component curcumin, which has been proven to have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, & anticancer activities, has been the subject of the most research among the curcuminoids.

Another class of substances found in *Curcuma longa* are essential oils, which are responsible for the plant's distinctive flavour and perfume. Turmerone, Ar-turmerone, and Curlone, which make up the majority of the essential oil, have been discovered to possess antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antibacterial effects.

The third main type of chemicals in *Curcuma longa* is polysaccharides. They are repeating sugar units that make up high molecular weight carbohydrates. *Turmeric longa* has three major

polysaccharides: turmerin, curdlan, and glycogen. These polysaccharides have been shown to have antiviral, anticancer, and immunomodulatory effects.

Medicinal properties of curcuma longa

Turmeric has a wide range of pharmacological effects that have been documented. One of its key ingredients, curcumin, is in charge of many of its biological effects. While it has demonstrated anti-inflammatory & antiparasitic efficacy through oral use in animal models, it also demonstrates anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, anti carcinogenic and gastrointestinal properties in vitro [17, 18, 19]. The following Table 1 displays the many pharmacological actions of turmeric and its components and extracts.

Table 1: Pharmacological properties of Curcuma longa

| Compounds | Health benefits | References |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Turmeric powder | Wound healing | [20] |
| Curcumin | Anti-bacterial, Anti-viral, Anti-coagulant, Anti-oxidant, Anti-tumor, hypoglycemic, hypollipemic | [21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27] |
| Volatile oil | Anti-fungal, Anti-bacterial, Anti-inflammatory | [28, 29] |
| Aqueous extract | Anti-fertility | [30] |
| Alcoholic extract | Anti-bacterial | [29] |
| Ethanol extract | Anti-protazon, hypollipemic, anti-tumor, Anti-inflammatory | [31, 32, 33, 34] |
| Chloroform extract | Anti-fungal | [35] |
| Petroleum ether extract | Anti-fertility, Anti-inflammatory | [30, 34] |
| Demethoxycurcumin | Anti-oxidant | [36] |
| Sodium curcuminat | Anti-bacterial, Anti-inflammatory | [29, 34] |

Wound healing activity

The complex process of healing a wound involves several stages, including coagulation, inflammation, radical material accumulation, proliferation, fibrous tissue and collagen creation, wound constriction with eventual generation of granulation tissue and scar tissue. Natural chemicals derived from plants have been examined in an effort to demonstrate their beneficial effects on wound treatment. For centuries, plant-based components have been utilized as natural remedies to heal wounds. Curcumin, the primary therapeutic constituent of the rhizome of turmeric, has been the focus of numerous studies due to its bio-functional properties, such as radical scavenging, antioxidant, antimicrobial, & anti-inflammatory activities, which make it a promising agent for wound healing. Curcumin also sped up the wound healing administration since it encouraged the creation of the growth factors necessary for wound healing [37].

Anti-inflammatory activity

Several scientific studies have found that turmeric has anti-inflammatory properties. It is reported that the chemical constituent of turmeric known as curcumin is in charge of its anti-inflammatory properties [38]. Daily et al. (2016) concluded in a randomised controlled trial comprehensive review and meta-analysis that curcumin supplementation can significantly reduce inflammatory markers such as C-reactive protein (CRP) and interleukin-6 (IL-6) in both healthy & chronic disease patients [39, 40].

Anti-oxidant activity

Turmeric leaves have been shown in research to exhibit antioxidant capabilities. The antioxidant properties of TL are derived from many bioactive components; including curcumin, total phenolic compounds, and flavonoids [41]. Curcumin in a study has been shown by Chainani-Wu et al. (2003) to scavenge free radicals and minimise oxidative damage in cells [42]. Curcumin's anti-oxidant activity has also been verified by additional investigations. Curcumin, for example, has been shown by Kuncha et al. (2017) to reduce oxidative stress and inflammation in the liver by enhancing the activity of antioxidant enzymes [43]. Similarly, Suresh et al. (2019) discovered that curcumin can protect cells from radiation-induced oxidative damage by the reduction of the formation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) & lipid peroxidation [44]. Furthermore, animal and cellular research According to a reliable source, curcumin may inhibit the action of free radicals while also stimulating the activity of other antioxidants. More human clinical trials are needed to confirm these advantages.

Anti-bacterial activity

Curcumin's antibacterial effects were initially reported by Schraufstatter and colleagues in 1949 [45]. Over the last seventy years, several studies have been undertaken to explore curcumin's broad-spectrum inhibitory activity against numerous bacteria. Turmeric is obtained from the root of *Curcuma longa*, a ginger family plant that is commonly grown in the tropical regions of southern and south-western Asia [46]. Curcumin has been shown to have antibacterial effect against bacteria that are both Gram-negative & Gram-positive [47-51].

Anti-viral activity

Its bioactive compound of *Curcuma long* named as Curcumin's medicinal benefits have been extensively researched, including anti-viral activity. Several researches have indicated the possibility of curcumin in inhibiting the replication of various viruses.

When you're feeling under the weather, try a cup of turmeric tea. Curcumin may aid in the battle against viruses such as herpes and the flu. (However, the majority of the research on this was conducted in a laboratory rather than on humans.) A study by Ide et al. (2012) reported that the combination of curcumin & acyclovir, an antiviral drug used for treating herpes simplex virus, significantly enhanced the inhibitory effect on the virus compared to the drug alone.

Anti-diabetic activity

Curcumin may be effective in preventing or treating type 2 diabetes since it can help combat inflammation and maintain blood sugar levels. One study examined 240 persons with prediabetes for 9 months and discovered that taking a curcumin supplement reduced their chances of getting diabetes. Research is underway, however most research have been conducted on animals rather than humans.

Anti-cancer activity

Curcumin, a key bioactive ingredient in turmeric, has been examined for its capacity to induce apoptosis (programmed cell death) and suppress cancer cell proliferation. Curcumin's key modes of action include inducing apoptosis and inhibiting cancer development and invasion via a variety of cellular signalling mechanisms. By targeting these pathways, Curcumin has the ability to decrease tumour growth, angiogenesis, and metastatic spread. Clinical trials have also evaluated the potential anticancer activity of curcumin in humans [55]. Although some trials have shown promising results, others have been inconclusive or have shown no significant benefit. However, it should be noted that curcumin possesses a low bioavailability, meaning that it is quickly metabolised and eliminated from the body [56-79]. Therefore, researchers are investigating various formulations and delivery methods to improve its efficacy.

Anti-coagulant activity

For several years, turmeric has been studied for its potential anti-coagulant potential. The active ingredient responsible for this activity is curcumin, which has been shown to inhibit blood clotting by interfering with the activity of platelets and other coagulation factors. Studies have also suggested that curcumin may have potential as a natural alternative to conventional anti-coagulant medications, such as warfarin, due to its fewer side effects. According to a study by Soni et al. (2012), curcumin, the active compound in turmeric, can inhibit platelet aggregation and prevent the formation of blood clots. Another study by Palatty et al. (2013) found that curcumin can decrease the activity of coagulation factors and increase the activity of fibrinolytic factors, which can promote the breakdown of clots. These studies suggest that *Curcuma longa* may have anti-coagulant properties, which could be beneficial for individuals at risk of thrombosis or those with cardiovascular disease. However, more research is required to fully understand the mechanisms & potential clinical applications of curcumin as an anti-coagulant agent.

Conclusion

In conclusion, turmeric is a potent herb that has been widely used in traditional medicine from ancient time. The plant contains several bioactive compounds such as curcuminoids, volatile oils, and polysaccharides, which have been thoroughly researched for their diverse pharmacological activities including anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, & anticancer, antimicrobial, and anti-coagulant activities. The review highlights the various phytochemical constituents and their potential therapeutic applications of *Curcuma longa*. The current scientific evidence suggests that the bioactive compounds found in turmeric may have the potential for preventing and managing a variety of chronic disorders. However, more rigorous & Clinical studies that are well-designed

are required to further validate the therapeutic potential of *Curcuma longa* and its bioactive compounds. Nonetheless, given its long-standing use and safety profile, *Curcuma longa* can be considered a good prospect for the creation of novel therapeutic medicines for a variety of ailments.

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