



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

Healing Foods: Turmeric

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | SEPTEMBER 10, 2016



Turmeric is one of the world's powerhouse foods, used extensively as a spice, condiment, and medicine for thousands of years in Chinese and Indian traditions, and showing up more recently in the cuisine and healing practices of the western world. Knowing all that we do about the inflammation basis of most age-related health conditions, turmeric, one of the most anti-inflammatory foods on the planet, is a food we all need to know about and include in our diets, or take as a supplement, regularly. Turmeric is currently one of the most intriguing and studied plants in the world with thousands of published research articles to its credit. This science tells us that turmeric is profoundly healing.

Turmeric is complex and diverse in its actions on the body. It is potently anti-inflammatory via its effects on gene expression (it down-regulates NF κ B, a powerful genetic control of inflammation in the body). It is an anti-oxidant, protecting vulnerable tissues and cell structures from the potentially damaging effects of free radicals (these are molecules extensively produced from the utilization of oxygen to make energy). Turmeric increases the genetic expression of Nrf2, leading to increased glutathione levels, the body's "master" anti-oxidant and detoxicant, and the cellular "life force" by virtue of its central role in the production of mitochondrial energy production.

Turmeric, accomplishing what no new-to-nature molecule (drugs) can, has been shown without question to be substantially helpful for the prevention as well as treatment of numerous disabling disorders, such as arthritis, allergies, numerous cancers, vascular disease (including coronary artery disease, heart attack and stroke), high blood pressure, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, autoimmune disorders, inflammatory bowel disease, depression and mood disorders, and many others, without the harmful effects of anti-inflammatory drugs. Drugs such as Ibuprofen and Aleve, used so commonly in peoples' everyday lives for aches and pains, are responsible for many thousands of deaths and hospitalizations annually due mostly to gastrointestinal bleeding, but also kidney and liver disease.

How best to use this incredible plant in food? It is wonderfully fragrant and lends a beautiful golden yellow color to your cooking. In Indian cooking it is used extensively in all foods: meats, vegetables, rice and condiments. Look to this cooking tradition for recipe ideas. It can easily be added to ground meats, sauces and dressings. I like to sprinkle it liberally into ground beef and lamb burgers and meat loaves.

Turmeric can also be taken as a supplement with excellent results, and I use it a great deal in my medical practice as well as for myself. Use a high quality Turmeric extract that contains at least 95% cucumeroids. Take 200-1000 mg 1-2 times daily between meals for inflammatory or energy deficiency disorders. It can be used instead of the highly toxic anti-inflammatory drugs with comparable effect on symptoms and substantially greater benefit on multiple health measures. It can also be beneficial to take it in a combination product with other anti-inflammatory herbs, such as ginger and boswellia.

Turmeric-Ginger Coconut Milk Smoothie:

1. *1 cup full-fatted organic canned coconut milk*
2. *1 tsp turmeric*
3. *1/2 tsp ground or fresh ginger*
4. *1/4 tsp ground black pepper*

Whisk ingredients together in small sauce pan and heat until just barely to a boil, then simmer for just a couple of minutes. Pour it out and sip hot or let cool until just warm. If you use fresh ginger, strain before drinking.

This is a delicious treat and tonic that can be used for healing or preventing inflammation. The black pepper helps with the absorption of the curcuminoids and the [coconut milk](#) is rich in medium-chain triglycerides that have rich health benefits.

Resources:

Healing Spices by Bharat B. Aggarwal, PhD

Power Up Your Brain by David Perlmutter, MD and Alberto Villoldo, PhD

At Home With Madhur Jaffrey: Simple, Delectable Dishes from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka by Madhur Jaffrey

Designs for Health: [designs for health.com](https://designsforhealth.com)

Inflammatone (contains turmeric in combination with boswellia, ginger, quercetin, rutin and rosemary extracts—designed as a powerhouse anti-inflammatory support).

C3 Curcumin Complex (contains this turmeric extract in a robust dose for multiple healing purposes).

KARYN SHANKS MD

Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

[READ MORE ARTICLES](#)

[CONTACT KARYN](#)

[GET INSPIRED](#)