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Our January 2012 Newsletter for Healthy Living

Spice Up Your New Year

One of the simplest and most enjoyable ways to make your meals healthier is by adding herbs and spices, and in the realm of spices, turmeric and its active ingredient curcumin may be king. Turmeric is the yellow-orange spice that is the foundation of many curry dishes. Research is emerging showing that this potent spice may play a beneficial role in preventing and treating numerous chronic diseases, and may also offer promise in helping people deal with obesity and obesity-related metabolic diseases.

A recent review in the European Journal of Nutrition suggests that curcumin may be useful for the treatment and prevention of obesity-related chronic diseases, as the interactions of curcumin with several signal transduction pathways -- the process by which biological functions are recognized -- also reverse insulin resistance, hyperglycemia, hyperlipidemia, and other inflammatory symptoms associated with obesity and metabolic disorders.

Curcumin is known for its potent anti-inflammatory properties, and chronic inflammation is the hallmark of most chronic disease, including diabetes, arthritis, and heart disease. But many people are not aware that obesity contributes to a state of low-grade, chronic inflammation in your body that can trigger metabolic disorders such as insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Curcumin appears to modulate several cellular

transduction pathways that contribute to this damaging process. As a result, researchers concluded: *"These findings might enable novel phytochemical treatment strategies as well as curcumin translation to the clinical practice for the treatment and prevention of obesity-related chronic diseases. Furthermore, the relatively low cost of curcumin, safety and proven efficacy make it advis-*

able to include curcumin as part of a healthy diet."

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Previous research has revealed similar findings, including that curcumin reduces the formation of fat tissue by suppressing the blood vessels needed to form it. As these researchers stated: *"Our results clearly demonstrate that curcumin at cellular and whole organism levels displays remarkable potential health benefits for prevention of obesity and associated metabolic disorders."*

The benefits of curcumin go far beyond weight loss. The compound has been shown to influence more than 700 genes, and it can inhibit both the activity and the synthesis of specific enzymes that have been implicated in inflammation. Also, curcumin currently has more evidence-based literature supporting its use against cancer than any other nutrient. Best of all, curcumin appears to be safe in the *treatment* of all cancers. Researchers have found that curcumin can affect more than 100 different pathways,

cell growth (angiogenesis).

However, much of curcumin's power seems to lie in its ability to modulate genetic activity and expression -- both by destroying cancer cells and by promoting healthy cell function. As such, evidence suggests curcumin may play a beneficial role in many health conditions, including: psoriasis, cystic fibrosis, type 2 diabetes, Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis and cataracts. You can use turmeric in your cooking but to get the full benefits curcumin has to offer, look for a turmeric extract in supplement form that contains 100 percent certified organic ingredients and at least 95 percent curcuminoids. For many this is a more convenient method to obtain the potential health benefits, especially if it is from a high-quality organic source, and also if you don't particularly enjoy the taste of curry.

Reference: *European Journal of Nutrition* April 2011; epub March 2011; *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* April 8, 2010; *Journal of Nutrition*, 2009 May; 139(5):919-25.

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Your Immune System and The Flu

It's a common misconception that the only way to avoid getting the flu is to make sure you don't come into contact with the virus, or if you do to wash it off your hands quickly before you touch your eyes or your mouth and allow the virus to invade your system. As a result, a large number of hand sanitizers and antibacterial soaps are heavily

resistance of certain people to getting sick, and that response is just as active as the response we all know and hate, which is being sick with the sniffles, fever, coughing and sneezing. It's just that the responses are different." There were differences in both gene expression and biological metabolism among those who got sick versus those who didn't, and the

"An active immune response accounts for certain people getting sick, and others not; the responses differ."

promoted each flu season as your best defense against the flu virus, but plain soap and water are all you need. In fact, Americans actually touch about 300 different surfaces every 30 minutes.

It's rather unrealistic to think that you can avoid ever coming into contact with an infectious virus like the flu, but just because you're *exposed* to a virus does not mean you will get sick! The determining factor? The health of your immune system! A new study by University of Michigan researchers may help put to rest the myth that you have to avoid the flu virus in order to avoid getting sick, because when they infected 17 healthy people with the flu, only half of them got sick. The other half? They felt perfectly fine. Interestingly, even if you don't notice the flu your immune system does. The researchers found changes in blood took place 36 hours before flu symptoms showed up, and *everyone* had an immune response, regardless of whether or not they felt sick.

The researchers later told MSNBC: *"Many people might conclude that if you are exposed to a virus and you don't get sick, it's because the virus didn't stick or it was so weak, it just passed right through your system and your system didn't notice. That's not a correct notion ... There is an active immune response which accounts for the*

differences were related to antioxidants.

In symptomatic participants, the immune response included antiviral and inflammatory responses that may be related to virus-induced oxidative stress. But in the non-symptomatic participants, these responses were tightly regulated. The asymptomatic group also had elevated expression of genes that function in antioxidant responses and cell-mediated responses. It is very difficult, if not impossible in most cases, for a strong immune system and infectious disease to exist together. It is the state of your immune system -- not the bacteria or virus itself -- that determines whether or not you will get sick, even if you come in contact with the germ.

If a healthy immune system is capable of keeping you flu-free year after year, is it necessary for you to get a flu shot? There are some important factors to keep in mind: All vaccines are immune suppressive -- that is, they suppress the immune system, which may not return to normal for weeks to months (and this could *increase* your risk of contracting the flu or another infectious disease). Flu vaccinations keep coming up short in study after study when it comes to having any measurable impact on what matters most, which is reducing illness and mortality from the flu. (After the largest flu-vaccination campaign in

Canadian history, a Canadian-led study (through the Cochrane Collaboration, a highly respected international network of researchers who analyze the scientific evidence, including the methodology, used in clinical trials) concluded that vaccinating nursing home workers had no effect on confirmed influenza cases among the homes' elderly residents. Only about 20 percent of flu-like illnesses are actually caused by influenza type A or B, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The other 80 percent are caused by more than 200 other bugs that can make you feel just as sick -- respiratory syncytial virus, bocavirus, coronavirus, and rhinovirus, to name a few.) The flu shot will do virtually *nothing* to prevent those latter viruses that cause 80 percent of flu-like symptoms. (Only a healthy immune system can do that! If you do come down with influenza and have a good immune response, you will likely quickly recover without serious complications, as well as obtain natural immunity to that strain of influenza and to similar ones.)

Since vaccines bypass your natural first-line defense (your "IgA" immune system), they are never 100 percent protective because they provide only temporary, typically inferior immunity compared to that your body would receive from naturally contracting and recovering from a disease. If you want to join the ranks of "those people" who rarely get sick, try some of the following simple health strategies: Get enough vitamin D; avoid sugar and fructose; exercise; eat plenty of raw food, and learn to deal effectively with stress.



Reference: Toxicological Sciences 2010; 117(1):45-53. Public Library of Science Genetics August 2011. "Why some people don't get the flu", MSNBC.com August 30, 2011. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2010 Feb. 17; (2):CD005187.

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CLA's: Grass-Fed vs. Grain-Fed Beef

If you are steering away from red meat due to the negative press on saturated fats, you may be happy to hear that a very powerful fatty acid primarily found in beef and dairy products has been linked to long-term weight management and health. This potent nutrient is called conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, and the best possible sources of CLA are grass-fed beef and raw dairy products that come from grass-fed cattle. Many ranchers are responding to the call by U.S. consumers by shifting from traditional, factory-farmed, grain-fed methods of raising cattle to a free-range, all-grass diet. Even the USDA is waking up to the consumer demand for grass-fed products. Their June 2010 publication of *Livestock, Dairy and Poultry Outlook* indicates that grass-fed beef represents 3 percent of the total U.S. beef production and has been growing about 20 percent for several years.

A host of research has been conducted on animals, under microscopes, and with humans to determine the impact of CLA on disease. Results have shown CLA to be a potent ally for combating cancer, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and triglycerides, osteoporosis, insulin resistance, inflammation, food-induced allergic reactions and immune system invaders. Exciting research with humans has shown that CLA has been beneficial in lowering body fat, with even greater improvement in those who combine exercise with dietary intake of CLA. Animal research has been even more promising, with significant improvements seen in both reducing body fat and in increasing lean body mass. Previous studies have shown that CLA reduces body fat while **preserving muscle tissue**, and may also increase your metabolic rate. A study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that people who took 3.2 grams of CLA a day had a drop in fat mass of about 0.2 pounds a week (that's about one pound a month) compared to those given a placebo. Since CLA cannot be manufactured in the human body, you must get it from your diet, and your best dietary source of CLA is grass-fed beef.

The natural diet for ruminant animals, such as cattle, is grass. When left to feed on grass-only diets, levels of CLA are three to five times more than

those fed grain-based diets. And that's just the start. A joint effort between the USDA and Clemson University researchers in 2009 determined a number of key areas where grass-fed is better than grain-fed beef for human health. In a side-by-side comparison, they determined that grass-fed beef was higher in beta-carotene, vitamin E, B-vitamins, total omega-3's, and the minerals calcium, magnesium and potassium; had a healthier balance of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids (1.65:1 vs. 4.64:1 grain-fed), and was lower in both total fat as well as saturated fats linked with heart disease. When a cow grazes on natural grass pastures, its body composition is affected accordingly: resulting in a ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids that is slightly above two. In other words, two parts omega-6 to one part omega-3, which is very close to the ideal ratio between these two fats.

Conventionally raised cattle, on the other hand, are shipped to giant feedlots and fed corn to fatten them up, which impacts your health as well. When a cow's diet primarily consists of grains, its body's composition (and subsequently yours) changes. In fact, previous studies on grain-fed steer found the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats was between 5-to-1 and 13-to-1, which is far from the ideal. Since you are what you eat, the beneficial effects of eating grass-fed beef and dairy products with the proper balance of fatty acids are translated into health benefits for you. These foods are rich in all the fats now proven to be health-enhancing, and low in the fats that have been linked with disease. Since meat from grass-fed animals is lower in fat than meat from grain-fed animals, this means that it is lower in calories as well. By switching to lean grass-fed beef, it is estimated that the average person in the U.S. could reduce intake up to 17,000 calories a year, which is equal to losing about six pounds!

Factory farming and feedlot conditions result in unhealthy animals. A list of these consequences includes acidosis, liver abscesses, bloat, feedlot polio and dust pneumonia. In addition, BSE, or mad cow disease, results when cows are fed bone meal and waste products from other cattle infected with the disease. In addition to everything already mentioned, factory farming has

further health consequences. Factory-farmed, commercially-produced animals carry a greater risk of spreading E.coli infection to humans, for example, due to the higher incidence of harmful bacteria growth in grain-fed animals and fecal contamination in feedlots. This is an extremely rare problem with grass-fed

Michigan Grass-fed Beef: Humanely-raised at Lamb Farm in Manchester, MI

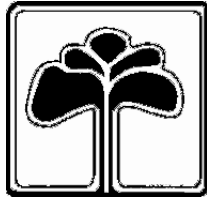


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cattle as cows that graze on grasses naturally maintain the proper ratios of healthy bacteria in their guts.

In addition, you might not suspect that factory farmed steak to be a source of heavy metals, pesticides, and an array of potentially harmful drugs. Conventionally-raised meats contain residues of everything the animal was exposed to, which includes veterinary drugs, heavy metal residues, pesticides from their grain-based diet, growth hormones and antibiotics. Lastly, environmental pollution produced by organic waste from cattle, and the enormous amounts of petro-chemical fertilizers used to produce feed crops is staggering. Grass, on the other hand, does not require fossil fuels to grow (rotating pastures does the job instead). The inherent differences between these two farming practices are truly vast. They are two distinctly different industries with entirely different environmental impacts, producing what is, in the end, two distinctly different animals. Grass-fed cows equate to healthier meat -- which leads to a healthier you -- and benefits the planet.

Reference: Krauss, W. E., Erb, J.H. and Washburn, R. G., "Studies on the nutritive value of milk II. The effect of pasteurization on some of the nutritive properties of milk," Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 518, page 11, January, 1933. *Grain and Grass Beef Production Systems*, <http://usda.mamlib.cornell.edu/usda/current/LDP-M/LDP-M-06-18-2010.pdf>. *A review of fatty acid profiles and antioxidant content in grass-fed and grain-fed beef*, California State University, College of Agriculture, University of California Cooperative Extension Service *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Vol. 79, No. 6, 1118-1125, June 2004. *Journal of Dairy Science* 1999 Oct;82(10):2146-56. *Journal of Animal Science* 80(5):1202-11. *Microbes Infect* 2, No. 1 (2000): 45-53.



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