

Indian spice may delay liver damage and cirrhosis

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Curcumin, one of the principal components of the Indian spice turmeric, seems to delay the liver damage that eventually causes cirrhosis, suggests preliminary experimental research in the journal *Gut*.

Curcumin, which gives turmeric its bright yellow pigment, has long been used in Indian Ayurvedic medicine to treat a wide range of gastrointestinal disorders.

Previous research has indicated that it has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties which may be helpful in combating disease.

The research team wanted to find out if curcumin could delay the damage caused by progressive inflammatory conditions of the liver, including primary sclerosing cholangitis and primary biliary cirrhosis.

Both of these conditions, which can be sparked by genetic faults or autoimmune disease, cause the liver's plumbing system of bile ducts to become inflamed, scarred, and blocked. This leads to extensive tissue damage and irreversible and ultimately fatal [liver cirrhosis](#).

The research team analysed tissue and blood samples from mice with chronic liver inflammation before and after adding curcumin to their diet for a period of four and a period of eight weeks.

The results were compared with the equivalent samples from mice with the same condition, but not fed curcumin.

The findings showed that the curcumin diet significantly reduced bile duct blockage and curbed liver cell (hepatocyte) damage and scarring (fibrosis) by interfering with several chemical signalling pathways involved in the [inflammatory process](#).

These effects were clear at both four and eight weeks. No such effects were seen in mice fed a normal diet.

The authors point out that current treatment for inflammatory [liver disease](#) involves ursodeoxycholic acid, the long term effects of which remain unclear. The other alternative is a [liver transplant](#).

Curcumin is a natural product, they say, which seems to target several different parts of the inflammatory process, and as such, may therefore offer a very promising treatment in the future.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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