

**PENNY SAVER NEWS HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

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Traveling to Remember

Have you ever been to India? Well, have you ever eaten a yellow Indian curry? If so, you might have given your memory a boost and helped keep Alzheimer's disease away. If not, there might still be time to enjoy it. Here's a little bit about what's going on in Alzheimer's research.

Turmeric is a plant related to gingers. Gingers and turmeric both are grown here for their colorful showy flowers. You may well have some in your garden or the neighborhood landscaping. But in Asia people are more interested in the roots than they are the flowers. The roots are the sources of spices. Ground ginger root of course is the main flavor in the fall favorite, gingerbread, and is used in many other dishes. Turmeric roots are boiled, dried and then ground to produce a bright yellow powder.

Turmeric powder has been used for thousands of years in southern Indian cooking. It's a major part of many curry recipes for meats, vegetables and pickles. It has a nutty taste with a bitter edge, so it's a good balance for sweeter spices. It is used in Asian, East African and Caribbean dishes too.

But besides the foods, turmeric has also been used for centuries as part of traditional healing methods. Turmeric was used on scraped knees and upset stomachs, head aches and 'nervous weakness'. Because of its long history of use as a medicine UCLA researchers started looking at it more carefully.

The most active ingredient of the several dozen they found is something called curcumin. Curcumin is both an anti-oxidant and an anti-inflammatory. Inflammation seems to be part of not just a hot, infected hangnail, but also the beginning of heart

disease, arthritis, cancers and possibly Alzheimer's. Something that is used in food and that might stop Alzheimer's could be a very interesting find.

So, they raised mice that have a condition similar to Alzheimer's. These mice have the same tangled-up proteins in their brains that people get when they start losing their memory. Then they fed half the mice curcumin and later studied all their brains. The mice who got the curcumin in their diets had half as much damage in their brains! Since then they've gone on to figure out that curcumin prevents the brain proteins from getting tangled up and forming plaques. It is those tangles that keep the brain from working right and ruin our memories.

The evidence that curcumin might work in people only comes from looking at different cultures. India has a much lower rate of Alzheimer's disease than many other countries. Studies in other Asian countries have found that people who eat lots of curry dishes do have fewer memory problems. This is not yet proof that it will work as a drug. But if it does, it will be something everyone can find. Turmeric is on the spice shelf in almost every grocery store. It doesn't spoil, and there are no known dangers from overdoses.

However the UCLA researchers warn that if it does become popular there will probably be lots of unscrupulous folks trying to sell any bright yellow powder they can find as the next miracle drug. Since FDA is not allowed to regulate the diet supplement industry there will be no guarantee that what you're getting is really turmeric.

In the meantime, if you'd like to try adding turmeric to your diet but don't care for curries, there are lots of other ways to use it. You can add a pinch to scrambled eggs or cheese sauce to boost the color and give a slightly unexpected flavor. Add 1/4 teaspoon to a cup of cooking noodles or rice for a brighter color and perkier flavor. For a deeper orange color in braised chicken or seafood add 1/4 teaspoon to the oil or butter you are using for the cooking. To make a bright orange dip for your Halloween party stir 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon into 1 cup of sour cream or mayonnaise with the other

flavorings. This week's recipe is a simple variation on potato salad for a beach picnic.

Enjoy!

### Golden Potato Salad

4 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed                      2 hard cooked eggs, peeled

½ C light mayonnaise    1 Tbsp prepared mustard

½ Tbsp ground turmeric    ½ C minced onion

Cook potatoes in boiling water until just barely tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and transfer to large bowl. In small bowl whisk together the mayonnaise, mustard, turmeric and onion. If you prefer, add a tablespoon of sweet pickle relish. Pour over warm potatoes and stir gently. Chop hard cooked eggs and stir into potato mixture. Serve warm or cold. Serves 4.

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