

Cures and curcumin: Turmeric offers potential therapy for oral cancers

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Turmeric—the familiar yellow spice common in Indian and Asian cooking—may play a therapeutic role in oral cancers associated with human papillomavirus, according to new research published in *ecancermedicalscience*.

One of the herb's key active ingredients - an antioxidant called curcumin - appears to have a quelling effect on the activity of [human papillomavirus](#) (HPV).

HPV is a virus that promotes the development of cervical and oral cancer. There is no cure, but curcumin may offer a means of future control.

"Turmeric has established antiviral and anti-cancer properties," says corresponding author Dr Alok Mishra of Emory University, Atlanta, USA. "And according to our new findings, we could say that it's good for oral health too."

Dr Mishra's research group first noted the effect of curcumin on HPV and cervical cancer cells in 2005. The antioxidant slowed the expression of HPV, suggesting that curcumin could control the extent of HPV infection.

"Since HPV-related oral cancer cases are on the rise, we tested the same hypothesis on oral cancer," Dr Mishra says.

"They turned out to be some very interesting findings."

The new research indicates that curcumin turns down the expression of HPV in infected [oral cancer](#) cells by downregulating the levels of cellular transcription factors AP-1 and NF-kB.

These findings could suggest a new therapeutic role for curcumin in cancer control.

While Dr Mishra cannot comment on the therapeutic benefits of turmeric in cooking, he says that the use of turmeric and other antioxidants may be good for health in general, and HPV-related oral cancers in particular.

Provided by ecancermedicalsience

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