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Curcumin and Pepper

I'm just back from Peoria, and there's nothing like spending a couple of days with health-conscious people to yield some very interesting questions. This week, I'm going to examine one question in detail: is turmeric absorbed as effectively without pepper in the blend? A phytonutrient found in turmeric called curcumin is being extensively studied for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. But pepper? I checked into it and here's what I found.

In a study done in 1998, researchers examined the absorption of curcumin with and without piperine, the phytonutrient that provides the pungent smell of pepper, in a group of rodents and a group of humans. Adding piperine to curcumin increased the absorption and bioavailability of the curcumin by 154% in the rodents and 2,000% in the humans. That's a tremendous increase, and that study is still cited today as the reason to take curcumin with piperine.



That raised a couple of questions that no one asked: has the increase in absorption yielded more health benefits and could it actually have any negative effects? We'll continue the look at curcumin on Thursday.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: Planta Med. 1998 May;64(4):353-6.

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