
Rhizoma Curcumae Longae

Definition

Rhizoma Curcumae Longae is the dried rhizome of *Curcuma longa* L. (Zingiberaceae) (1).

Dried rhizomes of *Curcuma wenyujin* Y.H. Lee et C. Ling, *C. kwangsiensis* S. Lee et C.F. Liang. and *C. phaeocaulis* Val. are also official sources of Radix Curcumae or Turmeric Root-Tuber in China (2).

Synonyms

Curcuma domestica Valetton., *C. rotunda* L., *C. xanthorrhiza* Naves, *Amomum curcuma* Jacq. (3–5).

Selected vernacular names

Acafrao, arqussofar, asabi-e-safr, avea, cago rerega, Chiang-huang, common tumeric, curcum, curcuma, dilau, dilaw, Gelbwurzel, gezo, goeratji, haladi, haldi, haldu, haku halu, hardi, haridra, Huang Chiang, hsanwen, hurid, Indian saffron, jianghuang, kaha, kakoenji, kalo haledo, khamin chan, khaminchan, kilunga kuku, kitambwe, kiko eea, koening, koenit, koenjet, kondin, kooneit, kunyit, kurcum, kurkum, Kurkumawurzelstock, luyang dilaw, mandano, manjano, manjal, nghe, nisha, oendre, pasupu, rajani, rame, renga, rhizome de curcuma, saffran vert, safran, safran des indes, skyer-rtsa, tumeric, tumeric root, tumeric rhizome, turmeric, ukon, ul gum, wong keong, wong keung, yellow root, yii-chin, zardchob (1–3, 6–14).

Description

Perennial herb up to 1.0 m in height; stout, fleshy, main rhizome nearly ovoid (about 3 cm in diameter and 4 cm long). Lateral rhizome, slightly bent (1 cm × 2–6 cm), flesh orange in colour; large leaves lanceolate, uniformly green, up to 50 cm long and 7–25 cm wide; apex acute and caudate with tapering base, petiole and sheath sparsely to densely pubescent. Spike, apical, cylindrical, 10–15 cm long and 5–7 cm in diameter. Bract white or white with light green upper half, 5–6 cm long, each subtending flowers, bracteoles up to 3.5 cm long. Pale yellow flowers about 5 cm long; calyx tubular, unilaterally split, unequally toothed; corolla white, tube funnel shaped, limb 3-lobed. Stamens lateral, petaloid, widely elliptical, longer than the anther; filament united to anther

about the middle of the pollen sac, spurred at base. Ovary trilocular; style glabrous. Capsule ellipsoid. Rhizomes orange within (1, 4, 6, 15).

Plant material of interest: dried rhizome

General appearance

The primary rhizome is ovate, oblong or pear-shaped round turmeric, while the secondary rhizome is often short-branched long turmeric; the round form is about half as broad as long; the long form is from 2–5 cm long and 1–1.8 cm thick; externally yellowish to yellowish brown, with root scars and annulations, the latter from the scars of leaf bases; fracture horny; internally orange-yellow to orange; waxy, showing a cortex separated from a central cylinder by a distinct endodermis (1, 9, 13).

Organoleptic properties

Odour, aromatic; taste, warmly aromatic and bitter (1, 9, 13). Drug when chewed colours the saliva yellow (9).

Microscopic characteristics

The transverse section of the rhizome is characterized by the presence of mostly thin-walled rounded parenchyma cells, scattered vascular bundles, definite endodermis, a few layers of cork developed under the epidermis and scattered oleoresin cells with brownish contents. The cells of the ground tissue are also filled with many starch grains. Epidermis is thin walled, consisting of cubical cells of various dimensions. The cork cambium is developed from the subepidermal layers and even after the development of the cork, the epidermis is retained. Cork is generally composed of 4–6 layers of thin-walled brick-shaped parenchymatous cells. The parenchyma of the pith and cortex contains curcumin and is filled with starch grains. Cortical vascular bundles are scattered and are of collateral type. The vascular bundles in the pith region are mostly scattered and they form discontinuous rings just under the endodermis. The vessels have mainly spiral thickening and only a few have reticulate and annular structure (1, 8, 9).

Powdered plant material

Coloured deep yellow. Fragments of parenchymatous cells contain numerous altered, pasty masses of starch grains coloured yellow by curcumin, fragments of vessels; cork fragments of cells in sectional view; scattered unicellular trichomes; abundant starch grains; fragments of epidermal and cork cells in surface view; and scattered oil droplets, rarely seen (1, 13).

Geographical distribution

Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam (1, 13, 16). It is exten-

sively cultivated in China, India, Indonesia, Thailand and throughout the tropics, including tropical regions of Africa (1, 7, 13, 16).

General identity tests

Macroscopic and microscopic examinations; test for the presence of curcuminoids by colorimetric and thin-layer chromatographic methods (1).

Purity tests

Microbiology

The test for *Salmonella* spp. in *Rhizoma Curcumae Longae* products should be negative. The maximum acceptable limits of other microorganisms are as follows (17–19). For preparation of decoction: aerobic bacteria—not more than 10^7 /g; fungi—not more than 10^5 /g; *Escherichia coli*—not more than 10^2 /g. Preparations for internal use: aerobic bacteria—not more than 10^5 /g or ml; fungi—not more than 10^4 /g or ml; enterobacteria and certain Gram-negative bacteria—not more than 10^3 /g or ml; *Escherichia coli*—0/g or ml.

Foreign organic matter

Not more than 2% (1, 9).

Total ash

Not more than 8.0% (1, 15).

Acid-insoluble ash

Not more than 1% (1, 9, 15).

Water-soluble extractive

Not less than 9.0% (1).

Alcohol-soluble extractive

Not less than 10% (1).

Moisture

Not more than 10% (1).

Pesticide residues

To be established in accordance with national requirements. Normally, the maximum residue limit of aldrin and dieldrin in *Rhizoma Curcumae Longae* is not more than 0.05 mg/kg (19). For other pesticides, see WHO guidelines on quality control methods for medicinal plants (17) and guidelines for predicting dietary intake of pesticide residues (20).

Heavy metals

Recommended lead and cadmium levels are not more than 10 and 0.3 mg/kg, respectively, in the final dosage form of the plant material (17).

Radioactive residues

For analysis of strontium-90, iodine-131, caesium-134, caesium-137, and plutonium-239, see WHO guidelines on quality control methods for medicinal plants (17).

Other purity tests

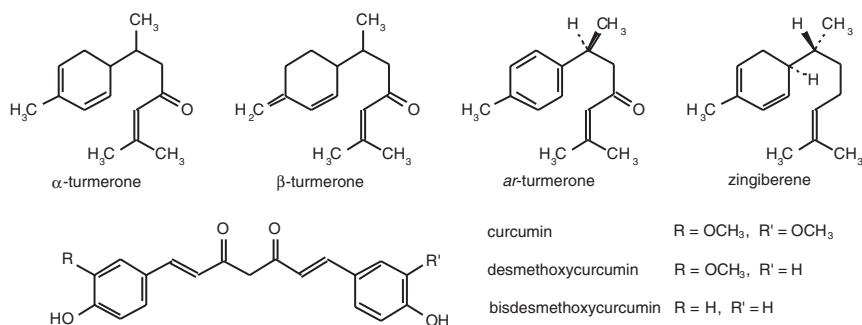
Chemical tests to be established in accordance with national requirements.

Chemical assays

Not less than 4.0% of volatile oil, and not less than 3.0% of curcuminoids (1). Qualitative analysis by thin-layer and high-performance liquid chromatography (1, 21) and quantitative assay for total curcuminoids by spectrophotometric (1, 22) or by high-performance liquid chromatographic methods (23, 24).

Major chemical constituents

Pale yellow to orange-yellow volatile oil (6%) composed of a number of monoterpenes and sesquiterpenes, including zingiberene, curcumene, α - and β -turmerone among others. The colouring principles (5%) are curcuminoids, 50–60% of which are a mixture of curcumin, monodesmethoxycurcumin and bisdesmethoxycurcumin (1, 6, 25). Representative structures of curcuminoids are presented below.



Dosage forms

Powdered crude plant material, rhizomes (1, 2), and corresponding preparations (25). Store in a dry environment protected from light. Air dry the crude drug every 2–3 months (1).

Medicinal uses

Uses supported by clinical data

The principal use of *Rhizoma Curcumae Longae* is for the treatment of acid, flatulent, or atonic dyspepsia (26–28).

Uses described in pharmacopoeias and in traditional systems of medicine

Treatment of peptic ulcers, and pain and inflammation due to rheumatoid arthritis (2, 11, 14, 29, 30) and of amenorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea, diarrhoea, epilepsy, pain, and skin diseases (2, 3, 16).

Uses described in folk medicine, not supported by experimental or clinical data

The treatment of asthma, boils, bruises, coughs, dizziness, epilepsy, haemorrhages, insect bites, jaundice, ringworm, urinary calculi, and slow lactation (3, 7, 8–10, 14).

Pharmacology

Experimental pharmacology

Anti-inflammatory activity

The anti-inflammatory activity of *Rhizoma Curcumae Longae* has been demonstrated in animal models (3, 30–32). Intraperitoneal administration of the drug in rats effectively reduced both acute and chronic inflammation in carrageenin-induced paw oedema, the granuloma pouch test, and the cotton pellet granuloma test (32, 33). The effectiveness of the drug in rats was reported to be similar to that of hydrocortisone acetate or indometacin in experimentally induced inflammation (31, 32). Oral administration of turmeric juice or powder did not produce an anti-inflammatory effect; only intraperitoneal injection was effective (33). The volatile oil has exhibited anti-inflammatory activity in rats against adjuvant-induced arthritis, carrageenin-induced paw oedema, and hyaluronidase-induced inflammation (32). The anti-inflammatory activity appears to be mediated through the inhibition of the enzymes trypsin and hyaluronidase (33). Curcumin and its derivatives are the active anti-inflammatory constituents of the drug (34–40). After intraperitoneal administration, curcumin and sodium curcumin ate exhibited strong anti-inflammatory activity in the carrageenin-induced oedema test in rats and mice (41). Curcumin was also found to be effective after oral administration in the acute carrageenin-induced oedema test in mice and rats (41). The anti-inflammatory activity of curcumin may be due to its ability to scavenge oxygen radicals, which have been implicated in the inflammation process (42). Furthermore, intraperitoneal injection of a polysaccharide fraction, isolated from the drug, increased phagocytosis capacity in mice in the clearance of colloidal carbon test (43).

Activity against peptic ulcer and dyspepsia

Oral administration to rabbits of water or methanol extracts of the drug significantly decreased gastric secretion (44) and increased the mucin contents of gastric juice (45). Intragastric administration of an ethanol extract of the drug to rats effectively inhibited gastric secretion and protected the gastroduodenal mucosa against injuries caused by pyloric ligation, hypothermic-restraint stress, indometacin, reserpine, and mercaptamine administration, and cytotoxic agents such as 80% methanol, 0.6 mol/l hydrochloric acid, 0.2 mol/l sodium hydroxide and 25% sodium chloride (30, 46). The drug stimulated the production of gastric wall mucus, and it restored non-protein sulfides in rats (46, 47). Curcumin, one of the anti-inflammatory constituents of the drug, has been shown to prevent and ameliorate experimentally induced gastric lesions in animal models by stimulation of mucin production (48). However, there are conflicting reports regarding the protective action of curcumin against histamine-induced gastric ulceration in guinea-pigs (41). Moreover, both intraperitoneal and oral administration of curcumin (100 mg/kg) have been reported to induce gastric ulceration in rats (41, 49–51).

Non-specific inhibition of smooth muscle contractions in isolated guinea-pig ileum by sodium curcuminates has been reported (41).

The effect of curcumin on intestinal gas formation has been demonstrated *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Addition of curcumin to *Clostridium perfringens* of intestinal origin *in vitro* and to a chickpea flour diet fed to rats led to a gradual reduction in gas formation (41).

Both the essential oil and sodium curcuminates increase bile secretion after intravenous administration to dogs (41). In addition, gall-bladder muscles were stimulated (39).

Clinical pharmacology

Oral administration of the drug to 116 patients with acid dyspepsia, flatulent dyspepsia, or atonic dyspepsia in a randomized, double-blind study resulted in a statistically significant response in the patients receiving the drug (27). The patients received 500 mg of the powdered drug four times daily for 7 days (27). Two other clinical trials which measured the effect of the drug on peptic ulcers showed that oral administration of the drug promoted ulcer healing and decreased the abdominal pain involved (28, 29).

Two clinical studies have shown that curcumin is an effective anti-inflammatory drug (52, 53). A short-term (2 weeks) double-blind, crossover study of 18 patients with rheumatoid arthritis showed that patients receiving either curcumin (1200 mg/day) or phenylbutazone (30 mg/day) had significant improvement in morning stiffness, walking time and joint swelling (52). In the second study, the effectiveness of curcumin and phenylbutazone on postoperative inflammation was investigated in a double-blind study (53). Both drugs produced a better anti-inflammatory response than a placebo (53), but the

degree of inflammation in the patients varied greatly and was not evenly distributed among the three groups.

Contraindications

Obstruction of the biliary tract. In cases of gallstones, use only after consultation with a physician (26). Hypersensitivity to the drug.

Warnings

No information available.

Precautions

Carcinogenesis, mutagenesis, impairment of fertility

Rhizoma Curcumae Longae is not mutagenic *in vitro* (54–56).

Pregnancy: teratogenic effects

Orally administered Rhizoma Curcumae Longae was not teratogenic in mice or rats (34, 57, 58).

Pregnancy: non-teratogenic effects

The safety of Rhizoma Curcumae Longae during pregnancy has not been established. As a precautionary measure the drug should not be used during pregnancy except on medical advice (59).

Nursing mothers

Excretion of the drug into breast milk and its effects on the newborn have not been established. Until such data are available, the drug should not be used during lactation except on medical advice.

Paediatric use

The safety and effectiveness of the drug in children has not been established.

Other precautions

No information on drug interactions or drug and laboratory test interactions was found.

Adverse reactions

Allergic dermatitis has been reported (60). Reactions to patch testing occurred most commonly in persons who were regularly exposed to the substance or who already had dermatitis of the finger tips. Persons who were not previously exposed to the drug had few allergic reactions (60).

Posology

Crude plant material, 3–9 g daily (5, 6); powdered plant material, 1.5–3.0 g daily (9, 19); oral infusion, 0.5–1 g three times per day; tincture (1 : 10) 0.5–1 ml three times per day.

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