

## Popular curry spice is a brain booster

- [04 August 2006](#)
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Call it yellow ginger, haldi, turmeric or E100, the yellow root of *Curcuma longa*, a staple ingredient in curry, is turning out to be gratifyingly healthy. Now Tze-Pin Ng and colleagues at the National University of Singapore have discovered that curry eating seems to boost brain power in elderly people.

Curcumin, a constituent of turmeric, is an antioxidant, and reports have suggested that it inhibits the build-up of amyloid plaques in people with Alzheimer's. Ng's team looked at the curry-eating habits of 1010 Asian people unaffected by Alzheimer's and aged between 60 and 93, and compared their performance in a standard test of cognitive function, the Mini Mental State Examination. Those people who consumed curry "occasionally" (once or more in 6 months but less than once a month) and "often" (more than once a month) had better MMSE results than those who only ate curry "never or rarely" (*American Journal of Epidemiology*, DOI: 10.1093/aje/kwj267).

"What is remarkable is that apparently one needs only to consume curry once in a while for the better cognitive performance to be evidenced," says Ng, who says he wants to confirm the results, possibly in a controlled clinical trial comparing curcumin and a placebo.

[From issue 2563 of New Scientist magazine, 04 August 2006, page 18](#)