

Curcumin and Stress

An animal study, appearing in *Brain Research* (2006; 1122(1): 56-64), looked at the effect curcumin had on chronic stress. Curcumin is a curcuminoid, which is one of the antioxidants that is a component of the rhizomes (root-like structures) of turmeric. Turmeric is a perennial plant, native to India, China, and Indonesia, that is botanically related to ginger. It is a component of curry powder and prepared mustard. Curcumin has been found to reverse the negative effects on physiology and behavior created by chronic stress.

In the study, rats were subjected to chronic stress for 20 days. The stress created hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis dysfunction. The physiologic dysfunction included increased adrenal gland weight (as compared to body weight), increased thickness of the adrenal cortex, an increase in corticosterone levels, decreases in glucocorticoid receptor mRNA expression and other physical and biochemical changes. The stress also created deficits in performance of various tasks. Treating the rats with either 5 mg/kg or 10 mg/kg of curcumin reversed or blocked all of these negative effects. However, a dose of 2.5 mg/kg was not sufficient to achieve these benefits.

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