

India's 'holy powder' finally reveals its centuries-old secret

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Scientists have unlocked the secrets of the "holy powder" turmeric. Image: Wikimedia Commons

Scientists in Michigan are reporting discovery of the secret behind the fabled healing power of the main ingredient in turmeric — a spice revered in India as "holy powder." Their study on the ingredient, curcumin, appears in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*.

In the study, Ayyalusamy Ramamoorthy and colleagues point out that turmeric has been used for centuries in folk medicine to treat wounds, infections, and other health problems. Although modern scientific research on the spice has burgeoned in recent years, scientists until now

did not know exactly how curcumin works inside the body.

Using a high-tech instrument termed solid-state NMR spectroscopy, the scientists discovered that molecules of curcumin act like a biochemical disciplinarian. They insert themselves into cell membranes and make the membranes more stable and orderly in a way that increases cells' resistance to infection by disease-causing [microbes](#).

More information: "Determining the Effects of Lipophilic Drugs on Membrane Structure by Solid-State NMR Spectroscopy -- the Case of the Antioxidant Curcumin," [Journal of the American Chemical Society](#).

Source: American Chemical Society ([news](#) : [web](#))

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