STM JOURNALS

Emerging Trends in
Metabolites

ISSN: 3049-1916
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2025
January–June
DOI (Journal): 10.37591/ETM

https://journals.stmjournals.com/etm

Review ETM

A Review Article on Spice up the Solution of Inflammation Through Phytomedicines

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Abstract

Inflammation is a complex, protective immune response essential for healing and combating infection. However, prolonged inflammation is associated with chronic diseases, such as arthritis, cardiovascular disorders, diabetes, and neurodegenerative conditions. Traditional nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and corticosteroids can exhibit adverse effects, particularly with chronic administration. This challenge has encouraged the exploration of natural alternatives. Among various natural anti-inflammatory agents, spices, such as ginger, garlic, turmeric, cardamom, and black pepper have gained significant attention due to their potent bioactive compounds, which have shown promising anti-inflammatory effects. This review discusses the classification, key chemical constituents, historical medicinal uses, and mechanisms of action of these spices, supporting their potential as natural alternatives for inflammation management. Phytomedicines, derived from plants and spices, have garnered significant attention in recent years due to their potent bioactive compounds, which have shown promising anti-inflammatory effects. This comprehensive review focuses on five spices, namely ginger (Zingiber officinale), garlic (Allium sativum), turmeric (Curcuma longa), cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum), and black pepper (Piper nigrum), which have been traditionally used for their medicinal properties.

Keywords: Inflammation, anti-inflammatory agents, chronic diseases, phytomedicines, spices, ginger, garlic, turmeric, cardamom, black Pepper

INTRODUCTION

Inflammation

Inflammation is an essential and complex physiological response that serves as the body's primary defense mechanism against harmful stimuli, including infections, injuries, and irritants. This protective response, initiated by the immune system, is designed to identify and neutralize pathogens, remove damaged cells, and initiate the healing process. Inflammation acts as a critical component of innate immunity, aiming to restore homeostasis and maintain tissue integrity [1]. Upon detection of harmful stimuli, immune cells release pro-inflammatory mediators, including cytokines, chemokines, and other signaling molecules, which coordinate the recruitment of immune cells to the site of injury or infection, fostering the necessary conditions for tissue repair [2].

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Received Date: December 14, 2024
Accepted Date: December 20, 2024
Published Date: December 24, 2024

Citation: Mohd. Wasiullah, Piyush Yadav, Amina Ahsan. A Review Article on Spice up the Solution of Inflammation Through Phytomedicines. Emerging Trends in Metabolites. 2025; 2(1): 1–10p.

Inflammatory responses are broadly categorized into two types: acute and chronic. These types differ in duration, underlying mechanisms, and implications for overall health.

TYPE

Acute Inflammation

Acute inflammation is a transient, protective

response characterized by swift onset and resolution, typically initiated by microbial invasion or physical trauma. Upon encountering harmful agents, immune cells, such as macrophages and neutrophils are rapidly activated and mobilized to the site of infection or injury. The acute inflammatory response is defined by five cardinal signs: erythema, increased temperature, edema, pain, and reduced functional capacity [3]. Increased blood flow, vascular leakage, and white blood cell migration cause these symptoms, leading to localized immune activity. Acute inflammation generally resolves within a few days to weeks once the threat is removed, allowing tissue repair and restoration. Failure to resolve acute inflammation, however, can potentially lead to chronic inflammation, a process that holds broader and more complex implications for long-term health [4, 5].

Example

- Conjunctivitis.
- Pneumonia.
- Appendicitis.

Chronic Inflammation

Chronic inflammation represents a prolonged inflammatory response that arises when the body is unable to eliminate the initial threat or when inflammatory stimuli persist over time. Chronic inflammation can persist for months to years, leading to harmful consequences. Persistent activation of immune cells in chronic inflammation leads to the release of additional pro-inflammatory cytokines and reactive oxygen species (ROS), which, over time, contribute to tissue and organ damage [6]. Chronic inflammation is a significant risk factor in the pathogenesis of various non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, rheumatoid arthritis, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer [7, 8].

Recent research has highlighted the role of lifestyle factors – such as poor diet, physical inactivity, and chronic stress – in exacerbating chronic inflammation, thereby increasing the risk of these diseases. Understanding the pathways and triggers of chronic inflammation is therefore critical for developing preventative and therapeutic strategies for managing inflammation-associated diseases [9].

Implications of Chronic Inflammation

Chronic inflammation disrupts cellular processes and homeostasis, leading to tissue degeneration and various diseases. For example, inflammatory processes drive joint degradation in arthritis and contribute to plaque formation in arteries, increasing the risk of heart disease. Chronic inflammation can lead to insulin resistance, increasing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes [1, 8]. Managing inflammation effectively is vital to prevent these conditions and maintain overall well-being.

Example

- Arthritis.
- Psoriasis.
- Cancer.
- Lupus.
- Colitis.

INTRODUCTION TO SPICES AS PHYTOMEDICINES

Spices have a long history of being used to reduce inflammation and promote overall health. Containing bioactive compounds like polyphenols, alkaloids, and terpenes, spices can modulate inflammatory pathways, providing a natural approach to inflammation management [9]. This review focuses on 13 notable spices, with an emphasis on ginger, garlic, turmeric, cardamom, and black pepper for their substantial anti-inflammatory potential. These spices are known for their unique compounds that support their use as phytomedicines [10].

Introduction to Selected Spices

The following Table 1 provides an overview of 13 spices known for their potential anti-inflammatory properties, highlighting their classification, botanical names, and key chemical constituents relevant to inflammation management.

Table 1. Overview of 13 spices with anti-inflammatory properties, including classification, botanical names, and key chemical constituents.

Common Name	Botanical Name	Family	Key Chemical Constituents
Ginger	*Zingiber officinale*	*Zingiberaceae*	Gingerol, shogaol, zingerone, paradol
Garlic	*Allium sativum*	*Amaryllidaceae*	Allicin, diallyl disulfide, ajoene
Turmeric	*Curcuma longa*	*Zingiberaceae*	Curcumin, demethoxycurcumin, bisdemethoxycurcumin
Cardamom	*Elettaria cardamomum*	*Zingiberaceae*	Cineole, limonene, terpineol
Ginseng	*Panax ginseng*	*Araliaceae*	Ginsenosides, polysaccharides
Black pepper	*Piper nigrum*	*Piperaceae*	Piperine, volatile oils
Green Tea	*Camellia sinensis*	*Theaceae*	EGCG, catechins, theaflavins
Cinnamon	*Cinnamomum verum*	*Lauraceae*	Cinnamaldehyde, eugenol, cinnamic acid
Rosemary	*Rosmarinus officinalis*	*Lamiaceae*	Rosmarinic acid, carnosic acid
Cayenne pepper	*Capsicum annuum*	*Solanaceae*	Capsaicin, dihydrocapsaicin
Saffron	*Crocus sativus*	*Iridaceae*	Crocin, crocetin, safranal
Oregano	*Origanum vulgare*	*Lamiaceae*	Carvacrol, thymol, rosmarinic acid
Cilantro	*Coriandrum sativum*	*Apiaceae*	Linalool, geraniol, carvone

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FIVE SPECIFIC SPICES

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)

Classification

Family: Zingiberaceae

Origin

Native to Southeast Asia.

History

Ginger has been used for over 5,000 years, especially in Ayurvedic and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) for digestive and anti-inflammatory purposes (Figure 1). Ancient Greeks and Romans highly valued ginger for its therapeutic effects, using it to treat various ailments, particularly those related to digestion and inflammation [11]. Oral administration of *Z. officinale* research on oral *Zingiber officinale* extract administration reveals contrasting effects based on consumption quantity. Specifically:

- Single or double doses elevate TNF-α in peritoneal cells.
- Prolonged consumption increases serum corticosterone levels and decreases pro-inflammatory markers [12].

Key Chemical Constituents

- *Gingerol:* Reduce inflammation and oxidation
- *Shogaol:* Enhance anti-inflammatory effect when ginger is dried or cooked
- *Zingerone:* Reduce oxidative stress and inflammation
- *Paradol:* Primarily found in ginger seeds, supports anti-inflammatory effects (Figure 2) [12, 13].

Anti-inflammatory Mechanisms

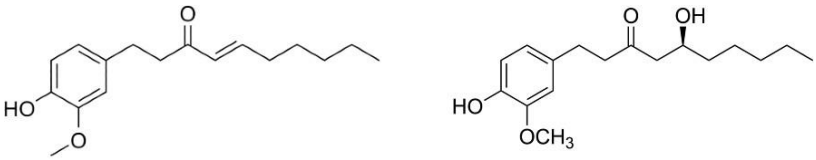
Gingerol and shogaol are well-known for inhibiting pro-inflammatory cytokines like TNF-α, IL-1β, and IL-6, which are central to inflammation. These compounds work by downregulating NF-κB, a

crucial transcription factor in inflammation, and COX-2 enzyme activity, which is responsible for pain and inflammation. Additionally, shogaols reduce oxidative stress, which is closely linked to chronic inflammation [14, 15].

How to Use in Inflammation

- *Ginger Tea:* Fresh ginger root (1–2 inches) can be grated and steeped in hot water to create an anti-inflammatory tea. This is particularly effective for soothing the throat and easing gastrointestinal discomfort.
- *Supplements:* Standardized ginger capsules are commonly used to manage systemic inflammation in arthritis.
- *Topical Use:* Topical application of diluted ginger oil exhibits analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects, providing relief for sore muscles and joints.
- *Ginger powder:* powder helps relieve musculoskeletal and rheumatism pain by reducing inflammation.

Figure 1. Ginger.



Shogaol Gingerol

Figure 2. Chemical structure of ginger.

Garlic (*Allium Sativum*)

Classification

Family: Amaryllidaceae

Origin

Central Asia.

History

Garlic has been utilized medicinally for over 5,000 years. It was particularly valued in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, where it was known as the “stinking rose” due to its pungent smell and reputation as a powerful remedy for infections and immune health. Garlic was historically regarded as a protective charm and valued for boosting strength and endurance (Figure 3) [16].

- *Plant Image: (Include an image showing garlic bulbs and cloves)*

Key Chemical Constituents

- *Allicin:* Garlic’s allicin has anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial effects.

- *Diallyl Disulfide:* Reduces inflammation by blocking harmful enzymes.
- *Ajoene:* Ajoene's anti-thrombotic and anti-inflammatory properties support cardiovascular health.
- *S-allyl Cysteine:* Aged garlic's antioxidant and anti-inflammatory powerhouse (Figure 4) [17].
- *Anti-inflammatory Mechanisms:* Allicin, garlic's key compound, fights inflammation by regulating immune responses.

Garlic's allicin reduces inflammation by controlling harmful cytokines. Additionally, compounds like diallyl disulfide and S-allyl cysteine scavenge free radicals, effectively reducing oxidative stress and further supporting garlic's role in managing chronic inflammation [18].

Figure 3. Garlic.

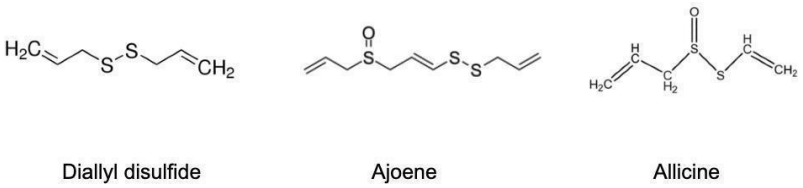


Figure 4. Chemical structure of garlic.

How to Use in Inflammation

- *Raw Consumption:* Chopped or crushed garlic cloves are best consumed raw after being allowed to sit for 10 minutes, which maximizes allicin production. Eating 1–2 cloves daily can help reduce inflammation.
- *Aged Garlic Supplements:* These supplements are available as capsules, providing concentrated S-allyl cysteine and diallyl disulfide.
- *Garlic Oil:* Applied topically, garlic oil (diluted) can relieve joint and muscle pain.

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)

Classification

Family: Zingiberaceae

Origin

Indian Subcontinent.

History

Turmeric, or *Curcuma longa*, has been utilized in Ayurvedic medicine for millennia, turmeric was primarily used as a dye before its therapeutic properties were discovered. In Ayurveda, it is prescribed for pain relief, wound healing, and digestion, thanks to its potent anti-inflammatory effects [19]. Curcumin shows promise in reducing inflammation in IBD patients (Figure 5).

Plant Image

(Include an image showing turmeric roots and the plant's leaves)

Curcumin

Key Chemical Constituents

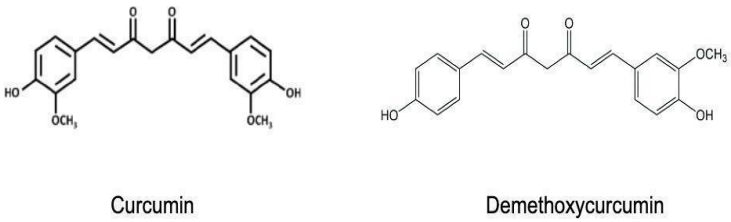
The primary compound with strong anti-inflammatory effects blocks NF-κB and inhibits COX-2 enzymes.

- *Demethoxycurcumin and Bisdemethoxycurcumin:* Support curcumin's anti-inflammatory effects.
- *Ar-turmerone:* Found in turmeric oil, enhances curcumin's absorption and has additional anti-inflammatory properties (Figure 6) [11].
- *Anti-inflammatory Mechanisms:* Curcumin is known for its potent anti-inflammatory action, primarily inhibiting the NF-κB pathway, COX-2, and lipoxygenase (LOX) enzymes. By reducing levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines like IL-6, TNF-α, and IL-1β, curcumin effectively lowers inflammation markers in the body. Additionally, its antioxidant properties protect tissues from oxidative damage, further aiding in the reduction of chronic inflammation [20].

How to Use in Inflammation

- *Golden Milk:* Combine turmeric, milk, and black pepper for optimal benefits.
- *Curcumin Supplements:* Curcumin extracts with added piperine are used for systemic inflammation management.
- *Topical Paste:* A paste made by mixing turmeric powder with water or honey can be applied to inflamed skin areas to reduce pain and swelling.

Figure 5. Turmeric.



Curcumin Demethoxycurcumin

Figure 6. Chemical structure of turmeric.

Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*)

Classification

Family: Zingiberaceae

Origin

India and Sri Lanka.

History

Known as the "Queen of Spices," cardamom has been a prominent spice in Ayurvedic and TCM for respiratory and digestive health. It was traditionally used in ancient Greece and Rome for its therapeutic effects on the gastrointestinal tract and as a remedy for congestion (Figure 7) [10].

Plant Image

(Include an image showing cardamom pods and the plant's foliage)

Key Chemical Constituents

- *Cineole:* An anti-inflammatory compound effective in reducing respiratory tract inflammation.
- *Limonene:* Limonene may have therapeutic applications in managing oxidative stress and inflammation.
- *Terpineol and Myrtenol:* Known for their anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial effects, especially beneficial for respiratory health (Figure 8) [21].
- *Anti-inflammatory Mechanisms:* Cardamom's essential oils, particularly cineole, reduce inflammation by inhibiting COX-2 and decreasing pro-inflammatory cytokines. Limonene adds to this effect by providing antioxidant protection, which helps neutralize. Free radicals and protect tissues from oxidative damage. Together, these compounds make cardamom especially beneficial for respiratory and digestive health [22].

How to Use in Inflammation

- *Cardamom Tea:* Crushed cardamom pods can be added to boiling water to make tea, which is beneficial for reducing throat and respiratory inflammation.
- *Essential Oil:* Cardamom oil can be inhaled or applied to the chest (when diluted) for relief from respiratory inflammation.
- *Capsules or Powder:* Cardamom supplements are taken to reduce inflammation, particularly beneficial for digestive health.

Figure 7. Cardamom.

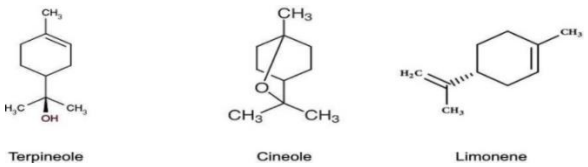


Figure 8. Chemical structure of cardamom.

Black Pepper (*Piper nigrum*)

Classification

Family: Piperaceae

Origin

Southern India.

History

Piper nigrum, or black pepper, possesses medicinal properties, known as the king of spices. It was used extensively in the ancient trade and revered for its therapeutic properties in digestion and respiratory health, particularly among the Greeks and Romans (Figure 9) [23].

Plant Image

(Include an image showing black pepper vines and clusters of berries).

Key Chemical Constituents

- *Piperine:* The main active compound, known for its anti-inflammatory and bio-enhancing properties.
- *Volatile Oils:* Including sabinene and pinene, these compounds add to black pepper's anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects.
- *Myrcene:* Has anti-inflammatory properties and enhances black pepper's overall effectiveness (Figure 10) [24].
- Anti-inflammatory Mechanisms: Piperine is primarily responsible for black pepper's anti-inflammatory effects. It works by inhibiting pro-inflammatory cytokines, such as TNF-α and IL-6. Additionally, piperine enhances the bioavailability of other anti-inflammatory compounds, particularly curcumin from turmeric, by inhibiting liver enzymes responsible for curcumin's breakdown, thus amplifying its effects. The antioxidant properties of volatile oils in black pepper further support its anti-inflammatory role by reducing oxidative stress [25].

How to Use in Inflammation

1. *Combined with Turmeric:* Black pepper significantly enhances curcumin absorption and is therefore commonly used alongside turmeric.
2. *Pepper Oil:* Black pepper essential oil diluted and applied topically, can reduce inflammation in muscles and joints.
3. *In Food:* Regular consumption of black pepper in meals can contribute to reduced inflammation, particularly in the digestive tract.

Figure 9. Black pepper.

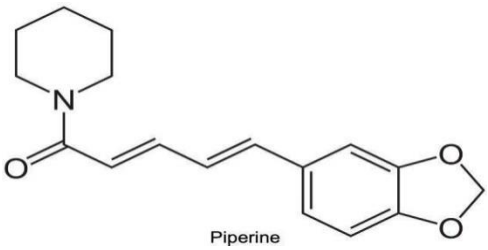


Figure 10. Chemical structure of black pepper.

CONCLUSIONS

The medicinal potential of ginger, garlic, turmeric, cardamom, and black pepper as anti-inflammatory agents is substantial. Each spice contains unique bioactive compounds that interact with inflammatory pathways, providing natural, safe alternatives to synthetic anti-inflammatory drugs. These spices have centuries of traditional use, supported by modern scientific evidence, highlighting their effectiveness in reducing inflammation and supporting overall health. Their integration into daily diets or as supplements offers promising, holistic solutions for managing inflammation and associated chronic conditions.

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