



October 30, 2006

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Spicy Spin on Easing Arthritis

Tests on Rats Show the Curry Spice Turmeric Deserves Further Study, Researchers Say

By [Miranda Hitti](#)
WebMD Medical News

Reviewed By [Louise Chang, MD](#)
on Monday, October 30, 2006

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Oct. 30, 2006 -- Turmeric, a curry spice, may curb arthritis joint inflammation, new research shows.

So say scientists including Janet Funk, MD, of the Arizona Health Sciences Center at the University of Arizona.

Turmeric been used for centuries in traditional Indian Ayurvedic medicine to counter inflammation, Funk's team notes.

"Clearly, however, additional preclinical and clinical trials must be conducted before the use of turmeric for arthritis can be recommended," the researchers write.

Their bottom line: Turmeric shows promise and deserves further study, but it's too soon to count on moving it from the spice rack to the medicine cabinet.

The study appears in *Arthritis & Rheumatism's* November edition.

Turmeric Trial

First, the researchers brewed their own turmeric extract to mimic the chemistry of commercial turmeric supplements.

Next, they injected the turmeric extract into the bellies of about 90 female rats. For comparison, they gave other rats shots lacking turmeric.

The rats got those shots every day for two weeks.

Four days after starting those shots, the mice also got shots of an arthritic compound.

Over the next 28 days, the mice in the turmeric group showed less joint inflammation and less joint damage than those in the comparison group.



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The study ended after that, so longer-term results aren't available.

More Findings

The turmeric extract apparently curbed certain genes involved in joint inflammation, Funk's team found.

The mice in the turmeric group also showed better bone mineral density than those in the comparison group.

Turmeric may help prevent bone loss, but that's not certain yet, the scientists note.

Five of the 87 mice in the turmeric group died during the study. The reasons for those deaths aren't clear.

The researchers call for more studies to see if turmeric will help ease arthritis in people.

SOURCES: Funk, J. *Arthritis & Rheumatism*, November 2006; vol 54: pp 3452-3464. News release, University of Arizona Health Sciences Center. News release, John Wiley & Sons Inc.

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