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Turmeric may help to prevent arthritis

Anne Ryman
The Arizona Republic
Oct. 30, 2006 12:00 AM

An ancient Asian spice may hold the key to preventing rheumatoid arthritis.

A University of Arizona researcher has found that turmeric, known for giving curry its yellow color, is effective in reducing flare-ups and staving off rheumatoid arthritis. The bitter spice acts as an anti-inflammatory.

The three-year study by Associate Professor Janet Funk appears in the November issue of the Arthritis and Rheumatism journal.

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Funk isn't ready to recommend that people rush out and buy turmeric supplements. More research is needed. The turmeric has been tested in animals but still needs to go through clinical testing, which could take another five years.

She calls the results in animals "extremely promising."

"I would be shocked if it had no effect in people," said Funk, a medical doctor and endocrinologist.

About 2.1 million Americans have rheumatoid arthritis, one of the most serious and disabling forms.

Doctors don't know what causes the disease, which can flare up and then sink into remission.

Funk said turmeric could have useful benefits for other types of arthritis and even for bone loss, although that has not been proven.

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