

Test could help prevent arthritis

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A New York doctor said a test developed by Dutch researchers could help prevent rheumatoid arthritis.

Dr. Steven Abramson said the test could detect whether patients with temporary inflammatory arthritis will eventually develop rheumatoid arthritis, which is characterized by the body's immune system attacking itself, causing damage to joints, cartilage and bone, CBS News reported Monday.

The test seeks out the presence of a specific antibody tied to the condition and allows doctors to prevent the condition before it develops using arthritis drug methotrexate.

"The blood test can be positive in some people before they even develop classical rheumatoid arthritis," Abramson said.

Six million people in the United States suffer from inflammatory arthritis and half of that number will develop the rheumatoid version of the ailment as a result. Abramson said doctors are often reluctant to treat patients before rheumatoid symptoms appear because of the drug's side effects. However, he said, the test could allow doctors to know which patients should receive treatment before developing the illness.

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