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## Modified carrots are good for bones

By MATTHEW WATKINS  
Eagle Staff Writer

Carrots may not just be good for your eyes anymore.

Texas A&M researchers say they now have carrots that are also good for your bones.

Scientists at the Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center at A&M, in conjunction with the Baylor College of Medicine, said they have developed a genetically modified carrot that packs more calcium per bite than the regular variety.

The researchers said they are working toward similar results with other fruits and vegetables, but so far they have only succeeded with carrots. The findings were published Monday in the online edition of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"It is a type of technology that can be applied to numerous fruits and vegetables that are normally pretty low in calcium," study co-author Jay Morris said in an interview with *The Eagle*. "This is a way to take something that is low and ... have it be more nutritious."

Morris said the modified carrots have about 60 mg of calcium, about twice as much as a regular carrot. However, humans only absorb about 41 percent of that calcium, compared to about 50 percent of the calcium in the regular carrots.

That still equates to an increase in calcium absorption, Morris pointed out.

The amount of absorption is a somewhat minor point at the moment, researchers said, because the daily requirement for calcium is 1000 mg -- well above the amount any enriched carrot could provide.

"A person could not eat enough to get the daily requirement [regardless of the absorption rate]," said Morris, who recently completed his doctorate degree at A&M's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

But if the technology the group developed at A&M is available in a wide range of fruits and vegetables, Morris said, it could be useful in fighting diseases such as osteoporosis.

Though the technology has been tested for consumption by people, and results have been published, Morris said a timeframe for when the food could be sold in stores is unclear.

The carrots used in the trial were made in a greenhouse under controlled conditions. The food's safety was limited to testing with 30 people, and larger studies would be necessary, according to A&M.

Still, Morris said, the relative simplicity of the process suggests that the development is important and could be duplicated with other plants in the future.

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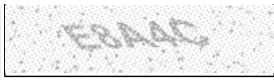
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