

Antibodies fight malaria

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Antibodies taken from Gambian people who are immune to malaria could be used to protect others from infection. Researchers already know that certain people are resistant to malaria because of a potent antibody that they have to a protein on the parasite's surface called merozoite-surface protein (MSP-1). But attempts to make vaccines using these antibodies have failed because they are difficult to test on animals

Now, Richard Pleass, of the University of Nottingham, UK, have developed a system for testing the antibodies in mice and used it to extract and refine antibodies taken from 10 Gambian individuals who are immune to malaria. They did this by genetically modifying *Plasmodium berghei*, which infects mice, so that it makes MSP-1, which is recognised by the human immune system. Tests in culture had already shown that the antibodies killed the human malaria parasite, but, by giving the genetically modified malaria parasite to mice, the team showed that the antibodies would protect the engineered animals as well. Mice without the human antibodies died.

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