

In Brief: Computer virus shield mimics immune system

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Computer scientists in Britain are working on a means of protecting computers that acts in much the same way that the human body defeats viruses.

The proposed intrusion-detection system acts as an artificial immune system that patrols the network and springs into action when it senses danger signals such as sudden increases in traffic and large numbers of error messages.

While similar security software has had trouble spotting viruses that appear to be normal e-mail, the project led by the University of Nottingham aims to detect the symptoms computer viruses cause in their very early stages and sounds the alarm when an attack is confirmed.

"The system works by detecting stress," Nottingham computer scientist Uwe Aickelin told NewScientist.com.

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