

# Scientists study flesh-eating bacteria

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Israeli scientists say they have discovered one reason "flesh-eating" bacteria are hard to stop is because of reactions with the immune system.

Emanuel Hanski, a microbiologist at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and colleagues discovered the success of group A Streptococcus is due, in part, to a protein that blocks the immune system's distress calls.

The researchers say the finding might lead to new strategies for treating necrotizing fasciitis and halting its rapid destruction of tissue.

"There are different avenues you could explore for treatment, all based on reducing the amount of ScpC the bacteria produces," said Hanski, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute international research scholar.

The bacterium wreaks destruction on muscle and skin tissue in the form of necrotizing fasciitis, which kills roughly 30 percent of its victims and leaves the rest disfigured. Antibiotics and surgical interventions, the known treatments, often fail.

The research is to be published in the Oct. 4 issue of the EMBO Journal.

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