

Sea snail saliva may become new treatment for most severe pain

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Scientists have developed a new version of a medication, first isolated from the saliva of sea snails, that could be taken in pill form to relieve the most severe forms of pain as effectively as morphine but without risking addiction. An article on the topic appears in the current issue of Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN), ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

C&EN Senior Editor Bethany Halford notes that a sea snails' [saliva](#) contains chemicals that help the slow-moving creatures catch prey. They include chemicals that the snails inject into passing prey with hypodermic-needle-like teeth that shoot from their mouths like harpoons. Scientists already have transformed one of these chemicals into a pain-reliever for humans, but it has to be injected directly into the spinal cord, limiting its use.

Now scientists in Australia have developed a form of the painkiller that can be given by mouth. It relieves severe pain, such as that in people with peripheral neuropathy, at a much lower dose than existing medications and without the risk of causing [addiction](#). The article quotes one expert as speculating that such a drug could revolutionize the treatment of the most severe forms of pain.

More information: "Pain Relief From Snail Spit" This story is available at pubs.acs.org/cen/science/88/8830sci2.html

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