

Taiwan scientists unveil new weapon in swine flu fight

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Taiwanese scientists said Tuesday they had developed an organic compound which could help control the global swine flu epidemic as the worldwide death toll from the disease passed 700.

The compound, which the researchers call NTU-VirusBom, can destroy viruses such as A(H1N1) swine flu and avian influenza and stop the spread of bacteria including those responsible for staph infections.

It could be used widely in [hygiene products](#), detergents and air filters, as well as face-masks and protective gear, the researchers from National Taiwan University said.

Researchers said the invention was of special significance amid signs that swine flu had started to develop resistance to [Tamiflu](#), the world's major anti-viral flu drug.

Against this backdrop, "this significant invention is sure to effectively help control the [swine flu epidemic](#)," professor Lin Shihming, a member of the research team, told reporters.

The team had started research on developing the anti-viral compound back in 2006 in response to the deadly H5N1 strain of [bird flu](#).

The technology has been transferred to a local company to mass produce products incorporating it.

Lin said the first products using the compound could hit the market in September.

The invention was unveiled as the World Health Organisation said Tuesday the death toll from [swine flu](#) had passed 700 since the outbreak began in April.

The virus first emerged in Mexico in April and the vast majority of deaths from it have been recorded in the Americas.

The WHO has said the virus is moving around the globe at "unprecedented speed."

Britain is the worst-hit territory in Europe, with estimates of 55,000 new cases of the A(H1N1) virus last week.

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