

Antibiotic alternative for battling meningitis-causing bacteria

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A study published online on May 24th in the *Journal of Experimental Medicine* suggests that boosting the abundance of one of the body's own proteins might be more effective than antibiotic treatment at fighting off a common meningitis-causing bacterium (*E. coli* K1).

E. coli K1 can lead to long-lasting neurological deficits and, in severe cases, death. The increasing prevalence of antibiotic-resistant strains coupled with the severe side effects of antibiotic treatment highlight the urgent need for new anti-bacterial therapies.

Nemani V. Prasadarao and co-workers show that injection of a natural anti-inflammatory [protein](#) called interleukin-10 protected mice against lethal infection with *E. coli* K1—even the antibiotic-resistant variety—without triggering the side effects of antibiotics.

Interleukin-10 is already used to treat adults with certain [autoimmune diseases](#). Whether it will be safe and effective in human infants infected with *E. coli* K1 remains to be seen.

More information: Mittal, R., et al. 2010. *J. Exp. Med.*
[doi:10.1084/jem.20092265](https://doi.org/10.1084/jem.20092265)

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