

Immunity to the common cold virus: sex and age matter

June 23 2011

Researchers in the UQ School of Medicine at Princess Alexandra Hospital have made an important discovery about how the immune system reacts to rhinoviruses, the viruses that usually cause the common cold.

The research team, led by Professor John Upham, found that young women make a much stronger [immune response](#) to rhinoviruses than young men. These differences disappear after menopause, so they are probably regulated by [sex hormones](#).

Professor Upham said that these findings were crucially important for finding new ways of combating rhinoviruses.

“While these viruses are just a nuisance in healthy people, they can make people with asthma or other chronic lung diseases very unwell,” he said.

“In our efforts to find new ways to prevent these infections, we need to take into account the effects of hormones, and how they affect the [immune system](#).”

Professor Upham said the researchers were studying how the immune system worked — or didn't work — in people with asthma.

The researchers will further study the effects of hormones on the immune system, with long-term plans for development of a vaccine.

The research was recently published in the journal *Respiratory Research*.

More information: respiratory-research.com/content/11/1/184

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Immunity to the common cold virus: sex and age matter (2011, June 23) retrieved 23 June 2024 from

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