

Bacteria may help battle cancer, study suggests

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Weakened germ injected into tumor killed malignant cells, researchers report.

(HealthDay)—Bacteria may offer a new way to treat cancer, a small, preliminary study suggests.

Researchers injected a weakened strain of *Clostridium novyi*-NT [bacteria](#) spores into tumors in six patients. The bacteria grew in the tumors and killed [cancer cells](#), the investigators reported.

C. novyi-NT, which lives in soil, is a close relative of the bacteria that causes botulism. Before injecting *C. novyi*-NT into the patients, the researchers weakened it by removing its dangerous toxin.

Five of the six [patients](#) are still alive, while one died from unrelated causes several months after receiving the bacteria injection, according to

the study to be presented Saturday at the annual Symposium on Clinical Interventional Oncology in Hollywood, Fla.

Research presented at medical meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"When tumors reach a certain size, parts of them do not receive oxygen, which makes them resistant to conventional therapies such as radiation and chemotherapy," study author Dr. Ravi Murthy, a professor of interventional radiology at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, said in a symposium news release.

"*C. novyi*-NT thrives under these conditions, hones in on the low-oxygen areas and destroys tumors from the inside while sparing normal tissue," Murthy explained.

C. novyi-NT also triggers an immune response to [cancer](#).

"Essentially, *C. novyi*-NT causes a potent cancer-killing infection in the [tumor](#)," study principal investigator Dr. Filip Janku, an associate professor in the department of investigation therapeutics at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, said in the news release.

The new findings are very preliminary and much additional research into the potential therapy is needed.

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about [cancer treatments](#).

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