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Exposure To Seasonal Flu Helps Fight Swine Flu

BY TOM FUDGE
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AUDIO

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SAN DIEGO — San Diego researchers say the novel H1N1 virus may not be as novel as once feared.

Past exposure to the seasonal flu won't prevent you from getting the swine flu. But scientists at the La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunity said it does make the H1N1 virus less potent and less deadly.

Institute member Bjoern Peters said his research team exposed adult blood samples to key elements of the novel virus. He said the blood didn't have the antibodies to prevent infection. But the T-Cells, the second line of immune response, recognized enough of the virus to mount an effective attack.

"So based on that we're arguing there is immune memory against swine flu which would explain why the infection, if you get it, is not going to be a very deadly infection," said Peters.

Immunologists with the National Institutes of Health said the research helps explain why swine flu is more dangerous to kids, who've had less exposure to seasonal flu.

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