

Scientists study *Helicobacter pylori*

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French scientists have outlined the biological role of a potassium channel in a pathogen that colonizes the stomach.

Kerstin Stingl and colleagues at the Pasteur Institute in Paris studied *Helicobacter pylori*, an unusual bacterium that lacks all known potassium uptake systems, but instead has one putative potassium channel, HpKchA.

They showed, for the first time, that channel is essential for potassium uptake into *H. pylori* at low external concentrations, and for colonization of the mucus lining of the stomach. The role of HpKchA as a bulk potassium uptake system represents an adaptation to the hostile, but competitor-free, gastric environment.

The findings follow recent reports that *H. pylori* is involved in several gastric pathologies, including chronic gastritis, gastric and duodenal ulcers and gastric cancer. The scientists say their study's results might have implications for drug development to treat *H. pylori*-associated gastric diseases.

The research appears online in *The EMBO Journal*.

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