

New drug kills malaria parasites in 48 hours

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Researchers at the St Jude Children's Research Hospital have developed a new chemical compound that rapidly destroys malarial parasites. The compound, (+)-SJ733, a single dose of it has been shown to kill 80 percent of malaria parasites in the bloodstream of mice within 24 hours. Within 48 hours the parasite was completely undetectable. The researchers are now planning human trials.

Laboratory evidence suggests that the compound's speed and mode of action work together to slow and suppress development of drug-resistant parasites.

"Our goal is to develop an affordable, fast-acting combination therapy that cures malaria with a single dose," said lead author of the study Dr R Kiplin Guy, chair of the St Jude department of chemical biology and therapeutics. He added, "These results indicate that SJ733 and other compounds that act in a similar fashion are highly attractive additions to the global malaria eradication campaign, which would mean so much for the world's children, who are central to the mission of St Jude."

The study is published in the proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America.