

- Cold (Disease)

'Exposure to cold virus may protect from COVID-19'

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WASHINGTON: Exposure to the virus that causes common cold can provide protection against infection by the SARSCoV-2 virus behind COVID-19, according to a study.

The research, published on Tuesday in the Journal of Experimental Medicine, found that rhinovirus, the common respiratory virus, jump-starts the activity of interferon-stimulated genes.

These genes trigger early-response molecules in the immune system which can stop reproduction of the SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, within airway tissues infected with the cold, the researchers said.

Triggering these defences early in the course of COVID-19 infection holds promise to prevent or treat the infection, said senior study author, Ellen Foxman, assistant professor at the Yale School of Medicine in the US.

One way to do this, Ms Foxman said, is by treating patients with interferons, an immune system protein which is also available as a drug. "However, recent genetic studies show that interferon-stimulated genes can also be protective in cases of COVID-19 infection.