

Developmental brain gene protects against Alzheimer's disease

More than five million people in the U.S. have Alzheimer's disease. Scientists at Harvard Medical School and their colleagues have made a breakthrough that could lead to a treatment for this currently incurable disease.

Much research on Alzheimer's has been directed at understanding the abnormally folded and entangled proteins in the brain that are key symptoms of the illness. Until now, though, scientists have been stumped to explain why many people with these anomalies do not develop the disease. A study published in March in *Nature* finds that a protein called REST helps the aging brain respond to stress and protects against cell death.

REST is a protein encoded by a regulator gene; it can suppress the expression of other genes. It was previously thought to be active in the brain only during fetal development, when REST oversees maturation of neural cells, becoming dormant soon after birth.

Read the full, original story: [Protective gene staves off dementia](#)