

Extraterrestrial protein found inside meteorite? If true, discovery bolsters pursuit of alien life

A team of researchers claim to have found a protein inside a meteorite. It would be the first protein ever discovered from beyond Earth, though not an indication of alien life – and other scientists are sceptical the analysis really found anything at all.

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Julie McGeoch, also at Harvard University, and her colleagues analyzed a pristine sample of a [meteorite](#) that was found in Algeria in 1990. First, they used a series of small, carefully sanitized drills – similar to dentistry ones – to collect material from deep inside the meteorite.

The researchers prepared the resulting powder by mixing it with liquids including water and chloroform. Finally, they fired a laser at the samples to turn them into gases, which are easier to analyze in a process called mass spectrometry.

When they examined the gases, the researchers found a combination of amino acids and additional atoms, which they say is evidence for the first extraterrestrial [protein](#).

“If this passes a technical review, then I would consider it to be an important result,” says Sasselov. “It points to certain types of chemical reactions which could have occurred on the surface of the Earth or other planets which could have led to or helped the [emergence of life](#).”

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