

Engineering transparent human cells brings us one step closer to a true ‘Invisible Man’

The project involves [genetically engineering](#) human cells to have the ability to vary their transparency. This is based on a characteristic found in cephalopods, the family of marine animals to which the squid belongs, that are able to change both the color and transparency of their skin. For example, certain female squid scare off aggressive males by changing the color of transparent tissue on their body to mimic the size, color, and position of testes found on male squid.

[Editor’s note: University of California, Irvine, scientists are using squid protein that could make it possible to make a real-life ‘Invisible Man’.]

What the researchers did in this latest piece of work was to take embryonic human kidney cells and grow them in a dish using a special technique to create the same protein found in color and transparency-shifting squid.

“We genetically engineered human cells to produce a squid protein called reflectin,” [Alon Gorodetsky](#), a researcher in chemical engineering and material science at UC Irvine, told Digital Trends.

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As he noted, “there is a lot of work, and many steps, left before we can achieve genetically encoded invisibility.” But such a thing could be “possible very far down the line,” although it will require “numerous breakthroughs” to get there.

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