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The Top 10 Everything of 2011

In 54 wide-ranging lists, TIME surveys the highs and lows, the good and the bad, of the past 12 months

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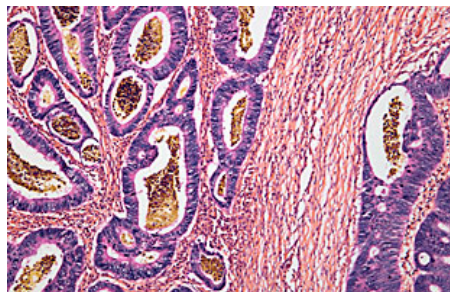
Top 10 Medical Breakthroughs

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6. The Curious Link Between Bacteria and Colon Cancer

By ALICE PARK Wednesday, Dec. 07, 2011



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Could colon cancer be caused by bacteria? In October, two research groups reported similar findings about a type of bacteria called Fusobacteria, which are rarely found among the usual bugs that live in our guts, but seem to flourish in colon cancer cells and are linked to **higher rates of the disease**. Comparing healthy colon tissue to cancer cells, researchers found that Fusobacteria were significantly more likely to be in cancer cells — in some samples they found hundreds of times more Fusobacteria in cancer cells than in healthy ones.

It's the first time that Fusobacteria have been linked to cancer, but earlier studies

have found that the microbes are associated with a higher risk of developing ulcerative colitis, a condition in which inflammation destroys the cells that line the colon and is also a risk factor for colon cancer.

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