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## Explain it: Oncoproteins

News and Communications Services

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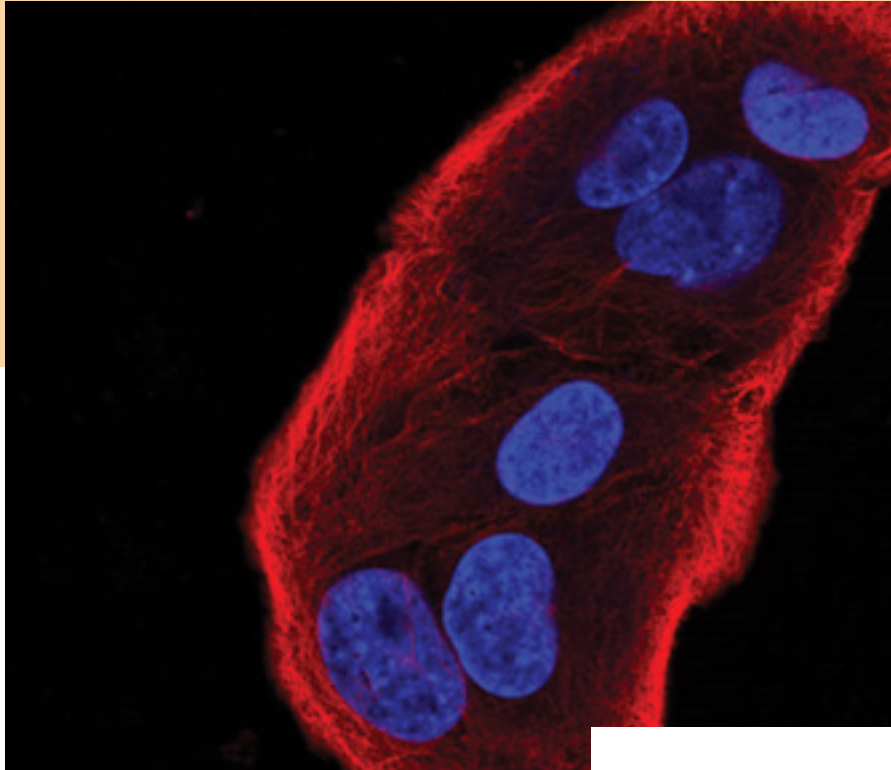
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*A microscope took this photo of two cells, shown in red, and oncoproteins, shown in blue. The two cells should have only two blue ovals of oncoproteins, but they have three times that amount because they are cancer cells.*

## oncoproteins

än-kō-'prō-tēns

*Nick Wallace, assistant professor of biology, explains, in under 100 words, what oncoproteins are and why they are important in detecting cancer.*

Most meals have some salt in them, but adding too much can ruin any dish. Oncoproteins are similar. Each of your cells makes oncoproteins, but only a small amount. A limited quantity of oncoproteins is helpful, but too much causes cancer. Some viruses like human papillomavirus, or HPV, make oncoproteins when they infect us, which also can cause cancer. Scientists have identified more than 100 types of oncoproteins. This helps doctors find and treat cancers sooner. Recognizing cancers early is a big deal, because the quicker you find a tumor, the easier it is to treat.

*See page 26 to learn more about Wallace's research on the links between skin cancer and HPV.*