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Tuesday, February 25, 2003

## DNA-based computer crunches numbers, gains energy, study says

By John Lauerman / Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON -- The world's smallest computer became the most efficient since scientists redesigned it to use data for fuel, according to a study in the Feb. 24 edition of the Proceedings of the National Academies of Science.

Constructed of DNA and protein-chopping molecules called enzymes, the computer literally "crunches numbers" encoded in strands of DNA, processing the information they carry and turning their components into energy, said study leader Ehud Shapiro, a computer scientist at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel.

Earlier versions of Shapiro's biocomputers, so small that 15,000 trillion of them can fit into a teaspoon, were powered by another energy-producing molecule, called ATP. This innovation makes the computer even more efficient and self-contained, Shapiro said.

"It represents self-sufficiency in its ultimate form," Shapiro said in an interview. "Biological computing gives us a new perspective on an old field."

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