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## Houston & Texas News

Nov. 9, 2006, 10:57PM

### Nanotechnology used to clean water

Rice University researchers may have a simple way to remove arsenic

New York Times

A common mineral similar to rust fashioned into a powder of tiny crystals could provide a simple, inexpensive method for removing hazardous levels of arsenic from drinking water, researchers at Rice University said Thursday.

That would help reduce the risk of cancer for tens of millions of impoverished villagers in China and Southeast Asia, where high levels of arsenic occur naturally in many water supplies, the researchers said.

Arsenic contamination is also a threat to water supplies in parts of Latin America, Africa and the United States, where the Environmental Protection Agency this year reduced allowable levels in municipal water systems to 10 parts per billion, down from 50 parts per billion.

The research, being reported in the journal *Science*, is the latest investigation into the environmental uses of nanotechnology. In this case, the researchers made crystals of the rustlike mineral magnetite.

The researchers found the magnetite particles could bind up to 100 times as much arsenic as the larger iron particles currently used in filters, yet still be extracted from test liquids with inexpensive magnets.

"This should come out costing 1 to 2 cents a day for a family of four in the developing world," said Mason B. Tomson, a professor of engineering at Rice who was a co-author of the report.

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