Nanoindentation of Viruses

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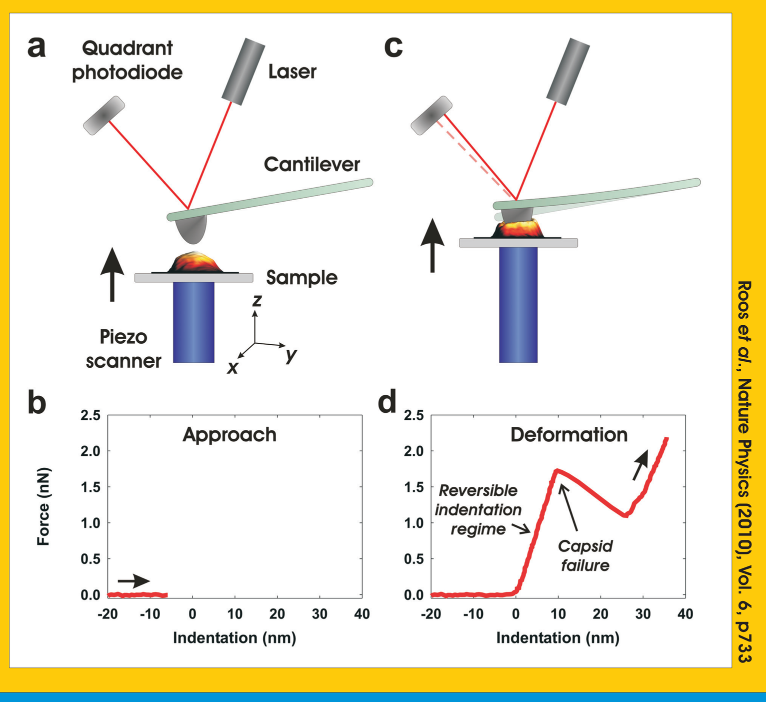
Jumping mode AFM & Force Spectroscopy

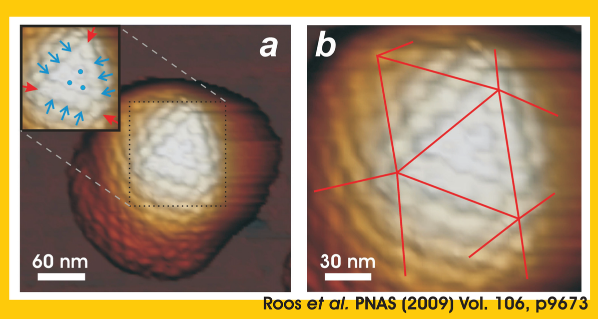
In jumping mode the lateral drag forces are avoided by performing the cantilever displacement when the tip and sample are not in contact. During imaging with jumping mode the tip performs a rapid succession of force-distance curves. At each point the tip approaches the object until the set force is reached and then retracts from the object.

Force Spectroscopy measurements on viruses are performed by indenting a viral capsid, a so-called nanoindentation experiment.



Herpes Simplex Virus 1

Intact capsids



Capsomeres can clearly be observed on the AFM images. The pentamers (red) and hexamers (blue) and the icosahedral faces are shown.

Pentonless particle

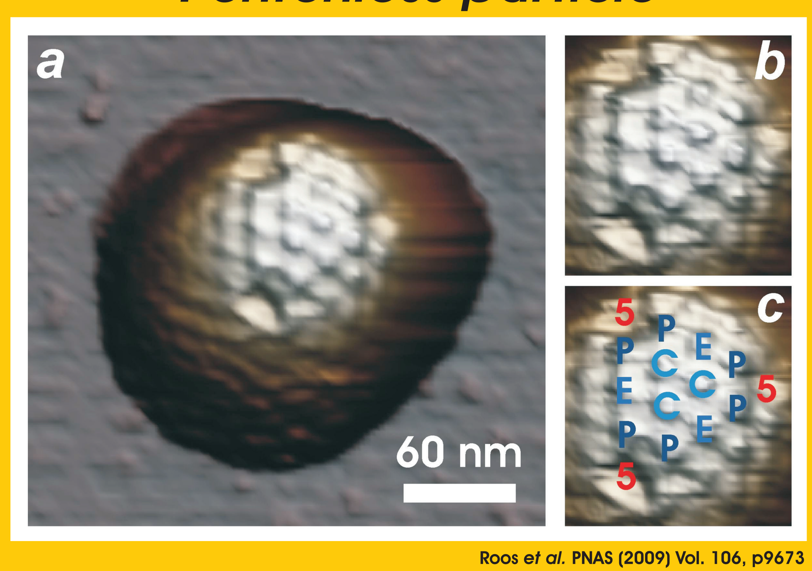
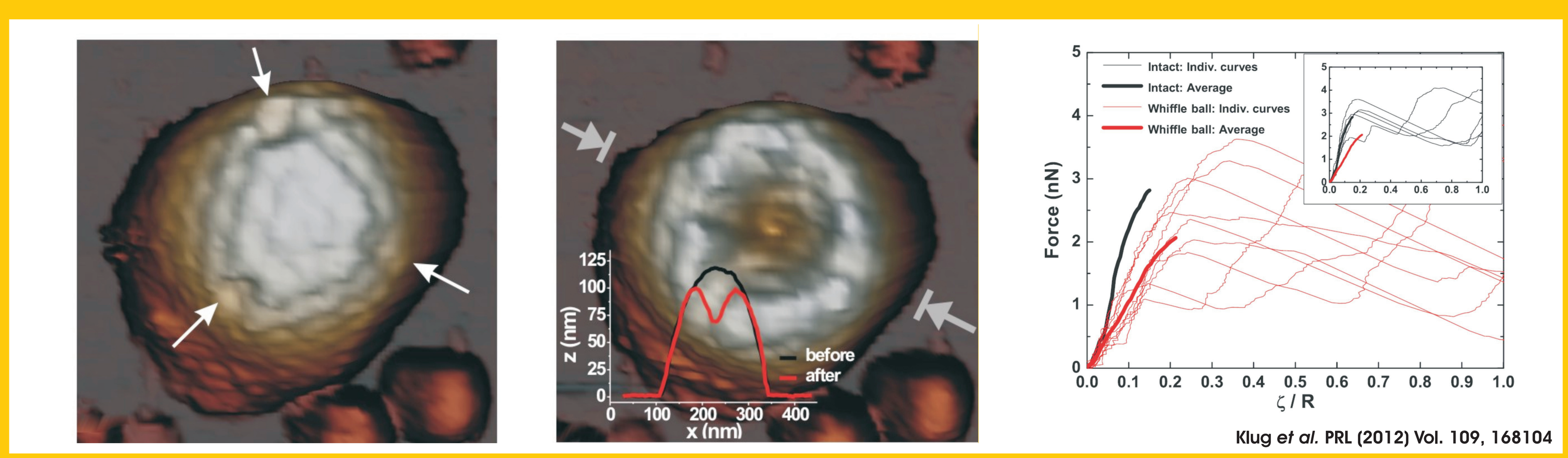
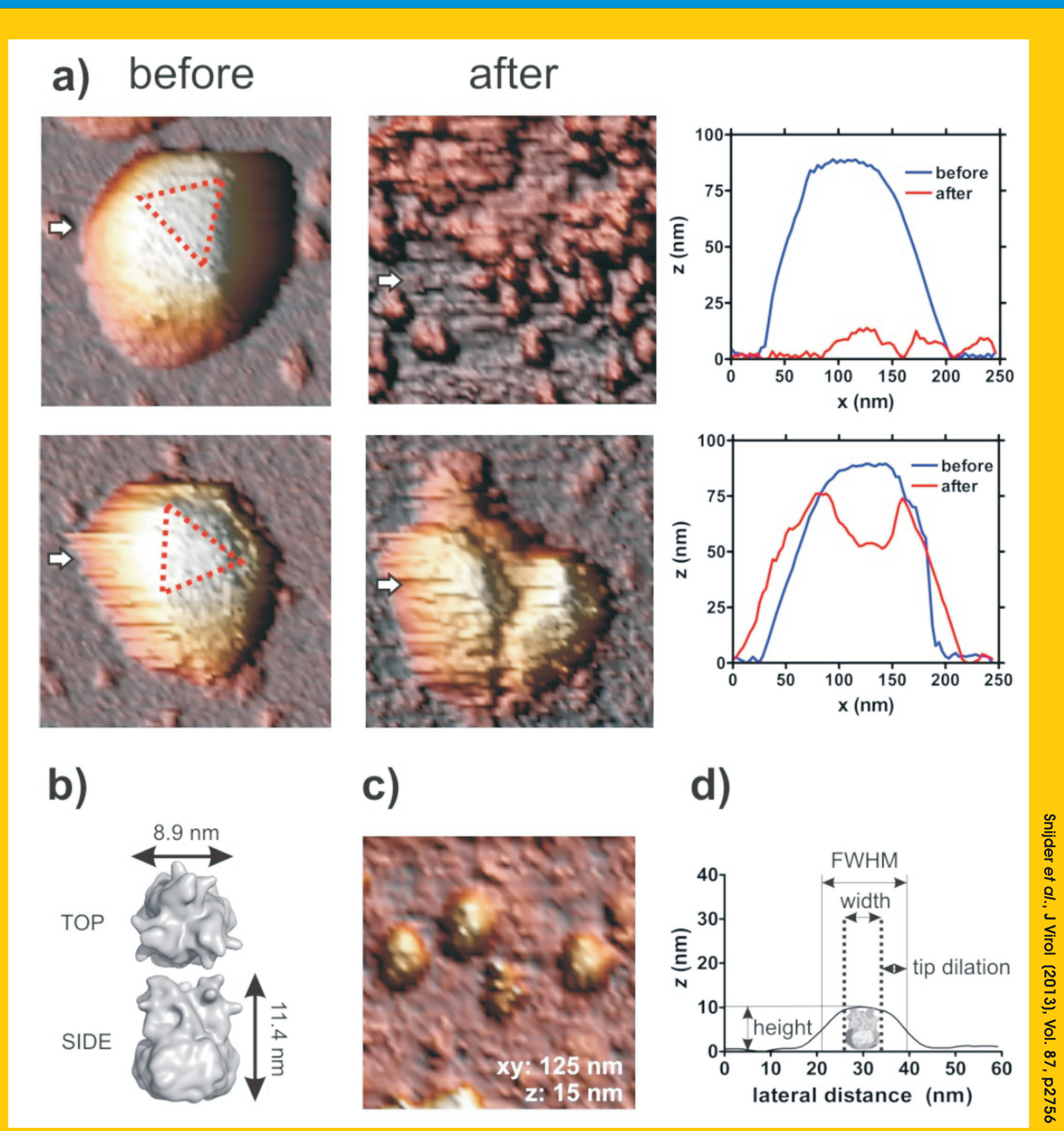


Image showing three holes at the position of the missing pentons (denoted with a 5 in c and d). The pentons are removed with 2 M GuHCl. P, E and C stands for peripentonal, edge and central hexon



Pentonless particle before and after indentation

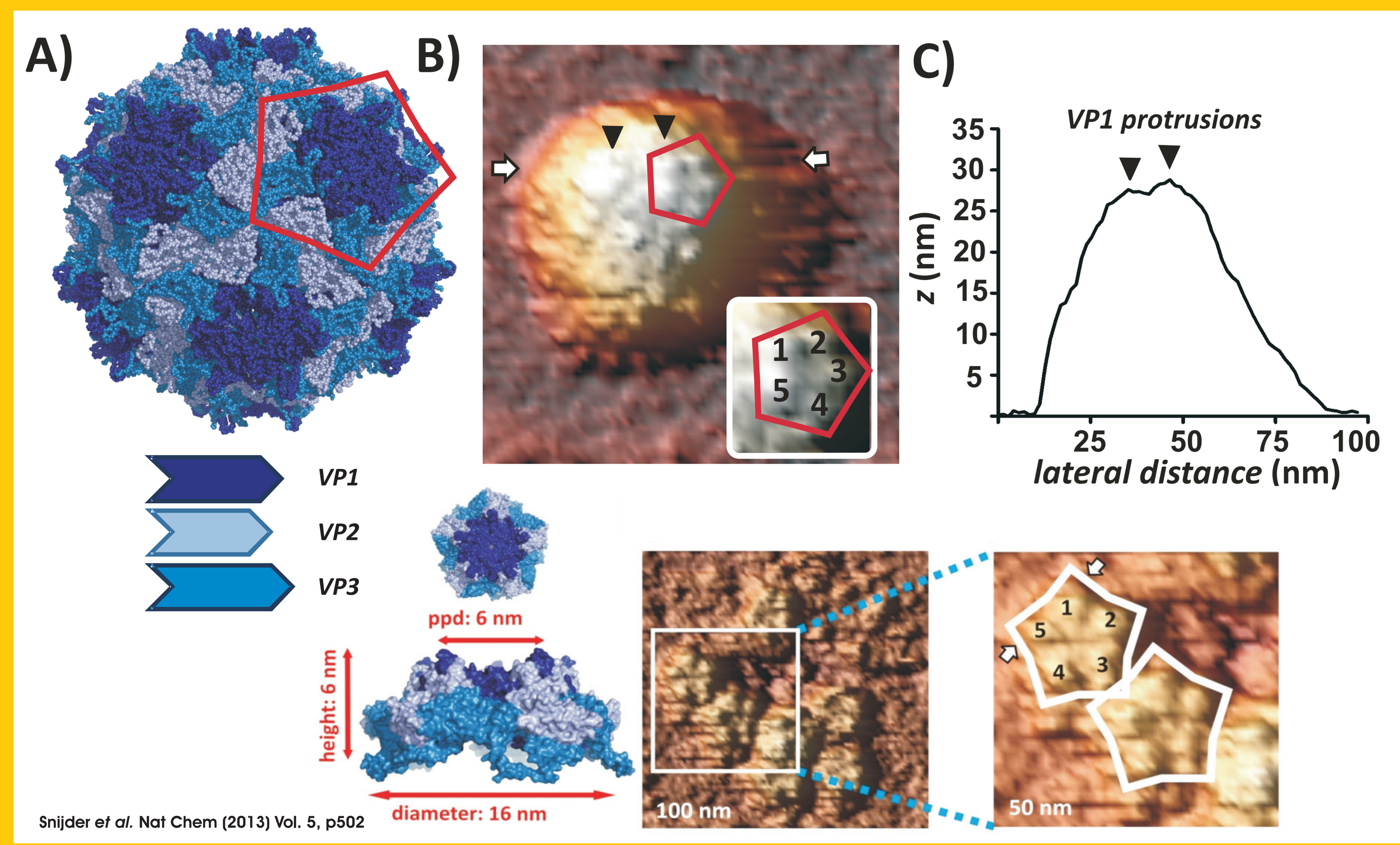
Adeno virus



a) Ad35F particles subjected to mechanical failure. The top row shows a particle that completely disintegrated into individual smaller particles in response to mechanical failure. Left is the particle before, right is the particle after nanoindentation. The corresponding height profiles are taken along the white arrows indicated in the images. The bottom row shows a particle that partially maintained capsid integrity upon mechanical failure. b) Surface rendering of an individual hexon trimer as described in the crystal structure of Ad35F; pdb 1VSZ. c) AFM images of the smaller particles that arise from mechanical failure of Ad35F. d) A typical height profile of force induced disassembly products.

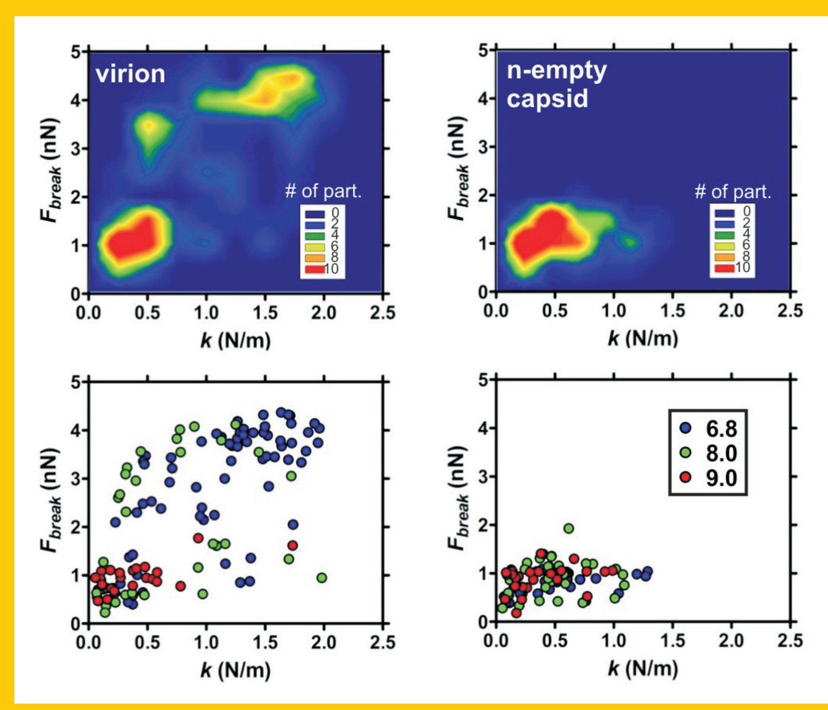
- Virus-host cell molecular interactions impact the mechanical properties of the virus capsid.
- Host cell molecules with opposite effects on capsid disassembly modulate the elastic response of the HAdV virion accordingly.
- We uncovered a direct link between capsid disassembly, genome uncoating and the mechanical properties of virus capsids.

Triatoma Virus

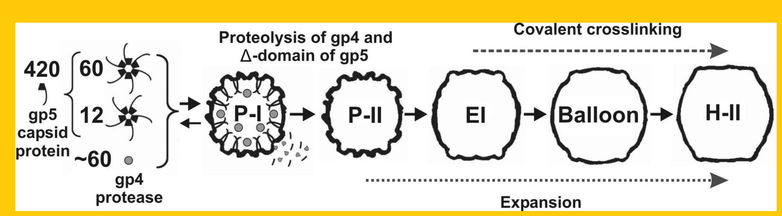


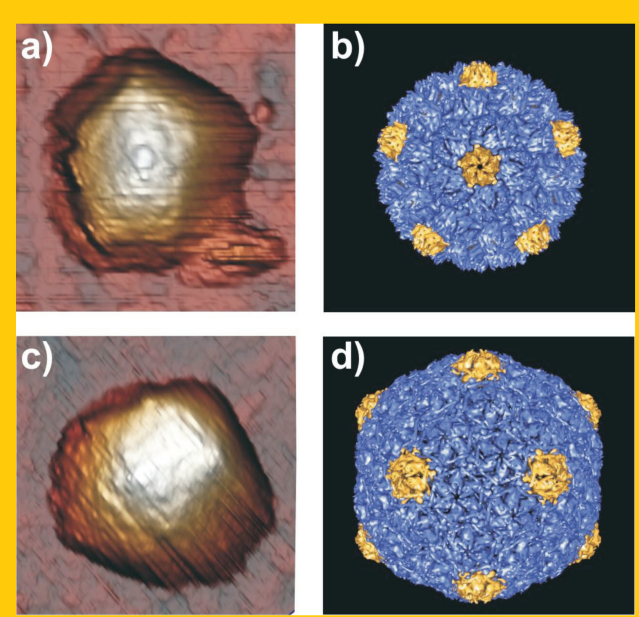
The AFM imaging results show pentamers before and after nanoindentation

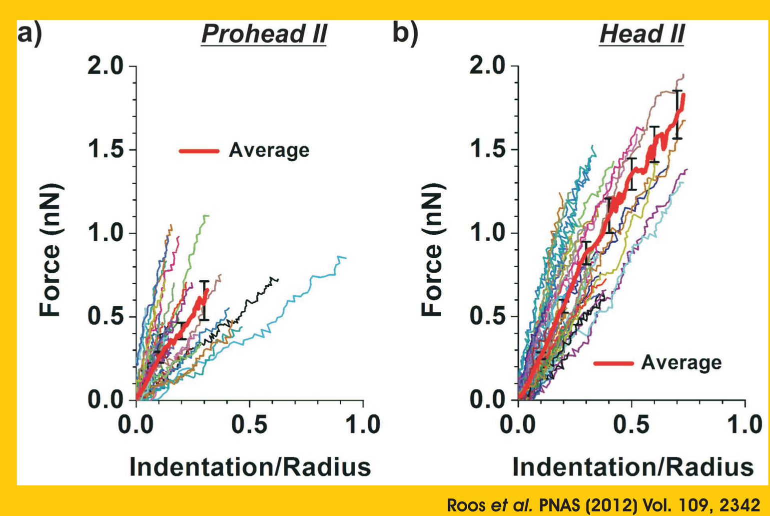
Top panels show the 2D density distribution (k vs. Fbreak) of single virions (left) vs. n-empty capsids (right), at pH 6.8, pH 8 and pH 9. Bottom panels show the individual points at different pH, from which the density distributions were calculated. The virion under neutral pH has a characteristically higher spring constant and breaking force than the empty capsid. With increasing pH, the spring constant decreases but the high breaking force is maintained, resulting in a discrete intermediate state. Consistent with genome release to yield empty capsids, all particles are mechanically indistinguishable from n-empty capsids at pH 9.



Phage HK97

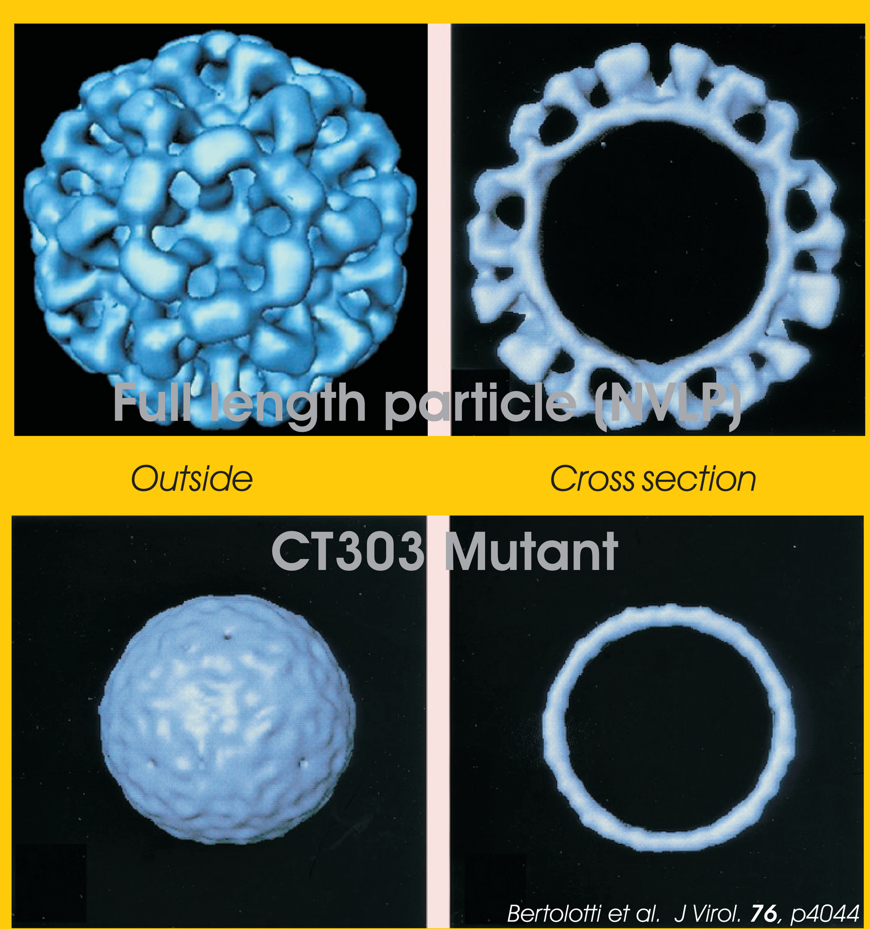


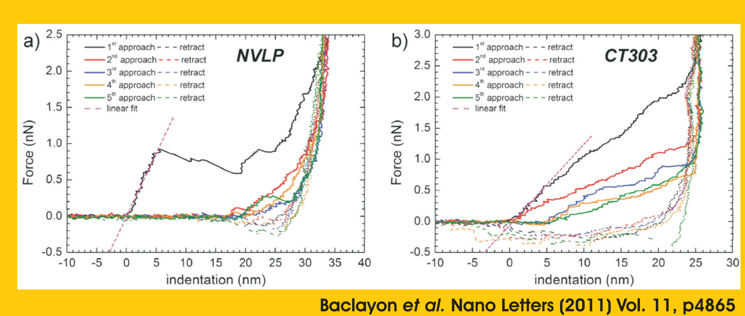


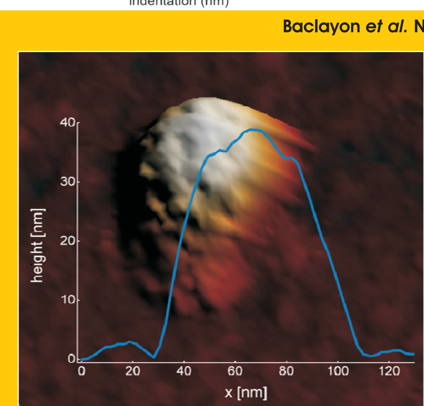


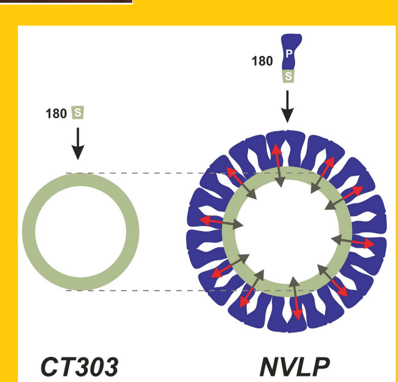
The AFM nanoindentation experiments on bacteriophage HK97 show a surprisingly complex maturation pathway in which the fragile Prohead II (P-II) is being strengthened by: i) an increase in Young's modulus, ii) an increase in ultimate strength and iii) resistance against material fatigue. The resulting particle is called Head II (H-II).

Norwalk Virus









AFM measurements on the Norwalk virus show the unexpected differences in mechanical behaviour of the thin shell mutant particle (CT303) with respect to the NVLP. This is in apparent contradiction to continuum elastic theory. Our results indicate that the "bridge-like" structures on the latter yield a particle under isotropic pre-stress that strenghens the virus.

NWO Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek

ViruScan

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