



Artist Unknown. Relief showing Helios, sun god in the Greco-Roman mythology (detail) (c.390–315 BCE). Marble. 33.8 in × 33.9 in × 8 5/8 in/85.8 cm × 86.3 cm. From Wikimedia Commons. Holding institution: Pergamon-Museum, Berlin, Germany.

## The Concept of the Crown and Its Potential Role in the Downfall of Coronavirus

Terence Chorba

Coronavirus virions are spherical or variable in shape and composed of an outer layer of lipid covered with a crown of club-shaped peplomers or spikes. Within each spike is a helical single-stranded RNA-containing structural protein. Although the term *corona* was first used in English in the 1500s,

it was borrowed directly from the Latin word for “crown.” *Corona* is derived from the Ancient Greek κορώνη (*korōnē*), meaning “garland” or “wreath,” coming from a proto-Indo-European root, *sker-* or *ker-*, meaning “to turn” or “to bend.”

In the 1967 initial description of an electron microscopic image of a human common cold virus, June Almeida (née Hart) and David Tyrrell described the surface of coronavirus particles as being “covered with a distinct layer of projections roughly 200 Å [20 nm] long....[with] a narrow stalk

---

Author affiliation: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2609.AC2609>