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Cosmic Neon Lights the Way
Written by Linda Vu
Spitzer Science Center
On Earth, neon signs point to motel vacancies and nearby eateries. Now for the first time, astronomers have spotted neon gas in disks around stars – and they're hoping the glowing gas will point the way to new discoveries about how planets rise from the materials that swirl around young stars.
"Gas is a very important ingredient in the evolution of a circumstellar disk. It plays an important role in the temperature balance and density structure of the disk, the chemistry, the dynamics, and eventually the formation of gas-rich and gas-poor planets," says Dr. Fred Lahuis of Leiden Observatory