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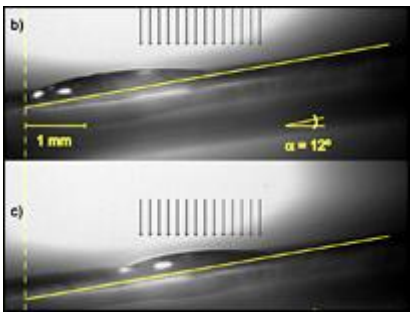
# Nanotech team move water droplets

**Scientists at Edinburgh University have used nanotechnology to move an object visible to the naked eye.**



Researchers succeeded in moving liquid droplets

**Researchers moved a tiny droplet of water along a surface, and even up a slope, using only light sensitive molecules.**

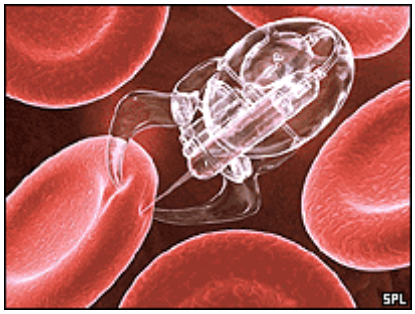
**They said it means that an age where laser beams are used to lift objects up and move them around could be closer than previously thought.**

**The machines used were 80,000 times thinner than a hair's breadth.**

**It is the first time nanotechnology has been used to move an object large enough to be seen by the naked eye.**

**Team members stressed that the research was in its early stages.**

**Professor David Leigh told BBC Radio's Good Morning Scotland programme: "Getting things from the lab to the real world is a major hurdle and what we've been able to demonstrate is that artificial molecular machines can be interfaced with, and perform a physical task in, our everyday world.**



There are high hopes for the future of nanotechnology

**"In the short term we're thinking of 'lab on a chip' technologies, where we move a droplet of liquid around on a silicon chip and it can be used for many different sorts of tests."**

**But he said in future it is hoped to be able to move much larger, more solid objects, using something as simple as a laser point.**

**In the future, the technology could lead to artificial muscles being built and the creation of surfaces that change their shape in response to light or electricity.**

**Nanotech manipulates molecules, and even atoms, to make novel materials.**

**The precision engineering exploits unusual electrical, optical and other properties - and the global race is on to develop the potential of the science.**

**A human hair is about 80,000 nanometres wide, while one nanometre is about a million times smaller than the diameter of a pinhead.**

**Nanoscale coatings are used to make stronger tennis rackets, clothes that are stain resistant, and windows that clean themselves.**

> **“In the short term we're thinking of 'lab on a chip' technologies”**
>
> **Prof David Leigh**

**However, the emerging science has its critics.**

**One organisation, the ETC Group, wants more commitment to the possible risks of nanotech already in use.**