

# The Woman Who Invented the Thread That Stops Bullets: The Genius of Stephanie Kwolek (Genius at Work! Great Inventor Biographies)

Edwin Brit Wyckoff



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Stephanie Louise Kwolek is an American chemist who invented poly-paraphenylene terephtalamide—better known as Kevlar. She was born in the Pittsburgh suburb of New Kensington, Pennsylvania. In 1964, in anticipation of a gasoline shortage, her group began searching for a lightweight yet strong fiber to be used in tires. The polymers she had been working with at the time formed liquid crystal while in solution, something unique to those polymers at the time. However, Kwolek persuaded technician Charles Smullen to test her solution. She was amazed to find that the new fiber would not break when nylon typically would.

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