



Image source and IMDB listing: [tt0066769](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066769/).

The Andromeda Strain

A race against time in which only science can save us.

Director: Robert Wise, (1971)..

Writers: Michael Crichton, Nelson Gidding.

Starts: Arthur Hill, David Hill, James Olson, Kate Reid, Paula Kelly.

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A learner-centric microbiology education framework

“*The Andromeda Strain*” is the film adaptation of Michael Crichton’s 1969 novel of the same name. Released in 1971 and directed by Robert Wise, this techno-thriller follows a team of scientists as they struggle to identify and contain an extraterrestrial microorganism that causes rapid and fatal blood clotting in its victims.

Although produced more than four decades ago, the film explores issues that remain strikingly relevant today, including biological warfare, biosafety and isolation measures, automation in biomedical procedures, and the challenges of decision-making in the face of an unexpected crisis. Its apocalyptic tone reflects Cold War anxieties about biological weapons—but since the apocalypse never goes out of style, it’s no surprise that a much weaker television remake appeared in 2008.

Crichton’s background as a physician lends the story a strong sense of scientific authenticity. The film meticulously portrays the stages through which the research team isolates, studies, and ultimately neutralizes the *Andromeda* microorganism. Many of the laboratory procedures shown are based on real techniques that, while now outdated, represented state-of-the-art science in 1971. These include decontamination and sterilization processes, the recreation of a high-security biological facility, the determination of

Andromeda’s pH viability range (the curve appears in the opening credits), the inoculation in diverse culture media, particle-size estimation through sequential filtration, sample preparation using an ultramicrotome for electron microscopy, X-ray diffraction analysis of crystalline structures, and the quantitative assessment of elements such as carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus.

The film also became embroiled in controversy over allegations of animal cruelty, primarily due to a scene in which a monkey appears to die instantaneously after exposure to the *Andromeda* agent. The sequence was so convincingly executed that it provoked public concern. However, no animals—neither monkeys nor rats—were harmed during filming. All scenes involving animals were supervised by the American Humane Association. For the disputed sequence, the monkey was placed in an air-filled enclosure within a room saturated with carbon dioxide. An off-camera operator, equipped with an oxygen tank and an auxiliary mask for the animal, ensured its safety. When the lid of the enclosure is lifted on screen, the monkey inhales CO₂, briefly loses consciousness, and is immediately revived with oxygen. The shot was completed in a single take.

Highly recommended.

The first version of this text was published in Spanish language in the N°59 of [NoticiaSEM](#), the monthly bulletin of the Spanish Society of Microbiology. This text is adapted from a more extensive article published in the [Journal of Medicine and Movies](#). The translation to English language has been done using AI tools.