

Are extreme athletes genetically drawn to take risk?

Studies of skiers, snowboarders and other extreme athletes are shedding new light on why different people are attracted to different types of activities – and learning more might help us establish exercise patterns we can stick with, as well as channelling behaviour like risk- and sensation-seeking toward a positive outlet.

This seemingly irrational attraction is what Dr. Cynthia Thomson decided to study for her doctoral work with UBC genetics researcher Dr. Jim Rupert.

She zeroed in on a gene called DRD4, which helps determine the density of dopamine receptors in the brain. A single variation in the coding of this gene has been associated in previous studies with sensation-seeking behaviour including drug use, and the skiers in Thomson's study with this particular variant of the gene displayed more risk-taking behaviour on the slopes.

Read the full, original story: [What makes extreme athletes take risks?](#)