

Genes from ancient cousins help modern humans fight disease

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According to a pair of scientific studies, key genes in the immune system come from our ancient “cousins”.

The findings, which appear in [The American Journal of Human Genetics](#), suggest we have Neanderthals to thank for being able to fight off pathogens.

But interbreeding may have had a downside, as the same genes may have made us more prone to allergies.

Modern-day people can trace their ancestry to a small population that emerged from Africa about 60,000 years ago.

As the African humans spread out across the world, they came into contact with other ancient humans based in Europe and Western Asia.

Genetic evidence suggests that these different “tribes” interbred, with part of the genome of Neanderthals still present in humans alive today.

Two groups of researchers – in France and the US – independently analysed genetic data on modern people from the [1000 Genomes](#) project together with the genome sequences of ancient humans.

They came to similar conclusions – that a particular cluster of important human immune genes come from Neanderthals and Denisovans.

Read full, original post: [Neanderthal genes ‘boosted our immunity’](#)