

Neanderthals' legacy genes: Some people taller, protect against schizophrenia

Neanderthals are still affecting what illnesses some people develop, how tall they are and how their immune systems work, despite being extinct for 40,000 years.

This is thanks to the Neanderthal DNA those of non-African descent inherited from ancestors who mated with our cousins some 50,000 years ago. A study has now revealed how this genetic legacy is still controlling how some people's genes work, with possible consequences for their health.

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Neanderthal control of human genes endures, [some of it positive and some negative](#). Evidence comes from an in-depth analysis of DNA from 214 people in the US, focusing on individuals of European ancestry. By comparing their modern DNA with that from Neanderthals – whose [genome was sequenced in 2008](#) – a team led by Joshua Akey at the University of Washington in Seattle was able to identify which Neanderthal gene fragments had survived and were still active in 52 different types of human tissue.

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In one example, it turns out that Neanderthals may still be protecting some people from developing schizophrenia, as well as making them taller.

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Elsewhere, however, the influence of our long dead cousins is receding, nowhere more so than in the brain and – unexpectedly – the testes. “Changes in gene regulation between modern humans and Neanderthals were greatest for these tissues,” says Akey.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Extinct Neanderthals still control expression of human genes](#).