

Inherited Neanderthal, Denisovan DNA may help with our metabolism, immunity and diet

Neanderthals and Denisovans went extinct some 35,000 to 40,000 years ago, but not before these closely related hominins interbred with modern humans. To this very day, the legacy of these interbreeding episodes live on in our DNA—at least among humans of European and Asian descent. As to why some of these archaic genes have stuck around over the eons is not fully understood, nor is their potential role in human functioning and health, whether good or bad.

New [research](#) published [October 17] in *Science* dives into these unknowns, uncovering new evidence suggesting some of these inherited genes—at least among modern Melanesians—conferred certain evolutionary benefits.

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This analysis resulted in the identification of inherited Neanderthal and Denisovan [copy number variants, CNVs] associated with adaptive selection, including CNVs associated with diet, metabolism, immunity, and cellular functions. The researchers also found two previously unknown genes, one from Neanderthals and one from Denisovans.

“Our results collectively suggest that large CNVs originating in archaic hominins and introgressed into modern humans have played an important role in local population adaptation and represent an insufficiently studied source of large-scale genetic variation,” the study authors wrote.

Read full, original post: [Modern Humans Inherited Even More DNA from Neanderthals and Denisovans Than We Thought](#)