

Addicted to the sun? Research shows it's in your genes

10 September 2020



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Sun-seeking behavior is linked to genes involved in addiction, behavioral and personality traits, and brain function, according to a study of more than 260,000 people led by King's College London researchers.

This means that people's behavior towards seeking sun is complicated by a [genetic predisposition](#), and this needs to be taken into account when designing skin cancer awareness campaigns.

The researchers studied detailed health information of 2,500 twins from TwinsUK, including their sun-seeking behavior and genetics. Identical twins in a pair were more likely to have a similar sun-seeking behavior than non-[identical twins](#), indicating that genetics play a key role.

The team then identified five key genes involved in sun-seeking behavior from a further analysis of 260,000 participants from other cohorts. Some of these genes have been linked to behavioral traits associated with risk-taking and addiction, including smoking, cannabis and alcohol consumption and number of sexual partners.

Senior author Dr. Mario Falchi from King's College London said: "Our results suggest that tackling excessive sun exposure or use of tanning beds might be more challenging than expected, as it is influenced by genetic factors. It is important for the public to be aware of this predisposition, as it could make people more mindful of their behavior and the potential harms of excessive sun exposure."

Dr. Veronique Bataille, Consultant Dermatologist involved in the research from King's College London added: "It is clear that we see individuals who have very unhealthy sun behavior and are fully aware of it. They will continue to expose themselves excessively even if they have clear skin cancer risk factors. Our research shows that genes regulating addiction and other risky behavior are important and may explain some of the reticence in changing behaviors in the sun."

More information: Sanna Marianna et al, Looking for Sunshine: Genetic Predisposition to Sun-Seeking in 265,000 Individuals of European Ancestry, *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jid.2020.08.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jid.2020.08.014)

Provided by King's College London

APA citation: Addicted to the sun? Research shows it's in your genes (2020, September 10) retrieved 13 September 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-addicted-sun-genes.html>

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