Your Genes May Determine Whether You Favor Certain Foods Over Others

DNA markers may predict people's preference for coffee, tea, alcohol, yogurt, cheese, tofu, fish, vegetables, meat and other edibles.

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Some people prefer coffee, while others may like tea better. Now, new findings published in the journal Nature Human Behavior suggest that individuals' predilection for different types of foods may be linked to their genetics, CNN reports.

For the study, researchers from the Riken Center for Integrative Medical Sciences and Osaka University in Japan reviewed the genetic data and food preferences of more than 160,000 Japanese people involved in the BioBank Japan Project. (This investigation collects DNA and clinical information to provide evidence for the implementation of personalized medicine.)

Scientists sought to find any evidence that might link people's food preferences to specific genetic markers. Researchers found genetic links for 13 dietary habits, including consumption of alcohol, other drinks and foods, as well as human diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

Nine gene locations were associated with the consumption of coffee, tea, alcohol, yogurt, cheese, fermented soybeans, tofu, fish, vegetables and meat. In addition, scientists learned that gene variations linked to the ability to taste bitter flavors were more likely to be found among people who preferred eating tofu and less likely to be found in those who consumed little to no alcohol.

Those who preferred eating a lot of fish, soybeans, tofu and veggies possessed a genetic variant that heightened their sensitive to savory or meaty flavors.

Because only Japanese natives were studied, experts said the genetic variations associated with food preferences might be different among other populations around the world. But previous studies have found similar links in different groups.

According to José Ordovás, PhD, director of Nutrition and Genomics at Tufts University in Massachusetts, who was not involved in the study, by "estimating individual differences in dietary habits from genetics, especially the 'risk' of being an alcohol drinker, we can help create a healthier society."

For related coverage, read “Sugary Drinks of Any Kind Increase Diabetes Risk,” “Could a Cup of Tea Keep Alzheimer’s Disease Away?” and “Can Coffee Reduce the Risk of Certain Liver Cancers?”

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