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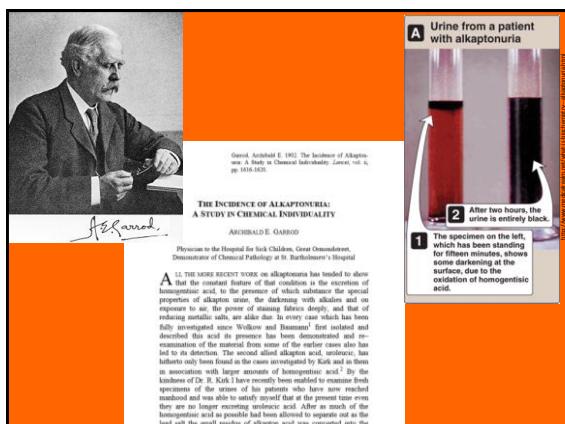
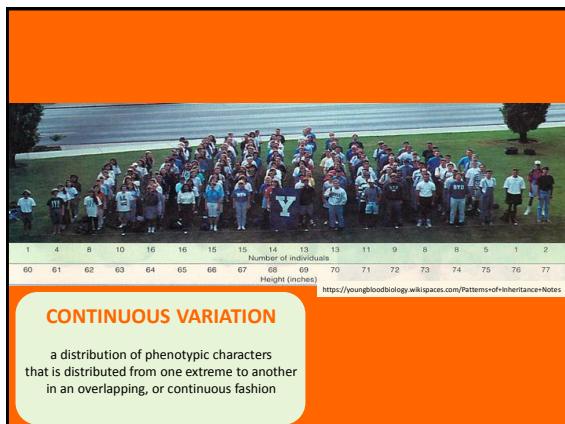
Introduction to Human Genetics

Module 1 Mendelian genetics

Mendelian inheritance in humans


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<http://udel.edu/~mcdonald/mythintro.html>

MYTHS OF HUMAN GENETICS
JOHN H. McDONALD
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE



Introduction

[Arm folding](#)
[Augerinus nose](#)
[Attached earlobes](#)
[Brettonia](#)
[Bent pinkie](#)
[Chest dimples](#)
[Cleft chin](#)
[Dionicio's thumbhole](#)
[Eacus](#)
[Eye color](#)
[Hair color](#)
[Hand whorls](#)
[Hand clasping](#)
[Hitchhiker's thumb](#)
[Mid-digital hair](#)
[PTC tasting](#)
[Toe length](#)
[Toes per rolling](#)
[Waistline pink](#)

Introduction to the myths

A fun way to teach the basics of genetics is to have students look at traits on themselves. Just about every biology student has, in one class or another, been asked to do this. This page is designed to give teachers some resources for how. Students can easily collect data on several different traits and learn about genes, dominant and recessive alleles, maybe even Hardy-Weinberg proportions. Best of all, these data don't require microscope, petri dishes, or study fly food.

Unfortunately, what textbooks, lab manuals and web pages say about these human traits is often wrong. Some of the most common variable human traits are not in classes we'd expect. For example, the single trait of *Augerinus nose* is NOT a simple one locus allele dominant vs. recessive method of inheritance. Rolling your tongue is not dominant to non-rolling, unattached earlobes are not dominant to attached, straight thumbs are not dominant to hitchhiker's thumbs, etc.

In some cases, the trait doesn't even fall into the two distinct categories described by the myth. For example, students are told that they either have a hitchhiker's thumb, which both hands do, or they don't, which is true. But, the single trait of *Hand clasping* consistently, with both thumbs, somewhere in the middle. This was clearly shown in the very first published genetics of hitchhiker's thumb (Glass and Kastler 1953), yet 60 years later, teachers still ask students which of the two kinds of thumb they have.

In other cases, the trait really does fall into two categories, but it's determined by genetics. For example, students are asked to fold their arms, then told that the allele for having the right forearm on top is dominant. It is true that most people fall into two categories, right arm on top or left arm on top, but the

