SMAD4 gene
SMAD family member 4

Normal Function

The SMAD4 gene provides instructions for making a protein involved in transmitting chemical signals from the cell surface to the nucleus. The SMAD4 protein is part of a signaling pathway, called the transforming growth factor beta (TGF-β) pathway, that allows the environment outside the cell to affect gene activity and protein production within the cell. The signaling process begins when a TGF-β protein attaches (binds) to a receptor protein on the cell surface, which turns on (activates) a group of related SMAD proteins. The SMAD proteins bind to the SMAD4 protein and form a protein complex, which then moves to the cell nucleus. In the nucleus, the SMAD protein complex binds to specific areas of DNA where it controls the activity of particular genes and regulates cell growth and division (proliferation). By controlling these cellular processes, the SMAD4 protein is involved in the development of many body systems.

The SMAD4 protein serves both as a transcription factor and as a tumor suppressor. Transcription factors help control the activity of particular genes, and tumor suppressors keep cells from growing and dividing too fast or in an uncontrolled way.

Health Conditions Related to Genetic Changes

Hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia

At least 27 mutations in the SMAD4 gene have been found to cause a form of hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia, a disorder characterized by certain blood vessel abnormalities. In particular, some smaller arteries (arterioles) abnormally flow directly into veins rather than into other vessels called capillaries. These abnormalities are called arteriovenous malformations. When they occur in vessels near the surface of the skin, where they are visible as red markings, they are known as telangiectases (the singular is telangiectasia).

The form of hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia caused by SMAD4 gene mutations is called juvenile polyposis/hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia syndrome. People with this disorder have the blood vessel problems associated with hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia as well as an increased risk of developing intestinal growths (polyps) at an early age; the polyps may become cancerous.

SMAD4 gene mutations that cause this disorder affect the TGF-β signaling pathway. Disruption of this pathway may interfere with both the tumor suppressor function of the SMAD4 protein and the appropriate development of the boundaries between
veins and arteries, resulting in the signs and symptoms of juvenile polyposis/
hereditary hemorrhagic telangiectasia syndrome.

**Juvenile polyposis syndrome**

At least 78 mutations in the *SMAD4* gene have been found to cause juvenile
polyposis syndrome, a disorder characterized by multiple noncancerous (benign)
growths called juvenile polyps. Most *SMAD4* gene mutations that cause juvenile
polyposis syndrome result in the production of an abnormally short, nonfunctional
protein. A lack of functional SMAD4 protein prevents binding to other SMAD proteins
and interferes with the transmission of chemical signals from the cell surface to the
nucleus. The SMAD protein complex is not activated and cannot be transported
to the nucleus, where it is needed to regulate cell proliferation and the activity of
certain genes. This unregulated cell growth can lead to polyp formation in people with
juvenile polyposis syndrome.

**Myhre syndrome**

At least four mutations in the *SMAD4* gene have been identified in people with Myhre
syndrome, a condition characterized by intellectual disability, a buildup of scar tissue
(fibrosis) in the skin and internal organs, and other problems affecting multiple body
systems and functions. These mutations affect the protein building block (amino
acid) at protein position 496 or 500 by replacing it with a different amino acid. Studies
suggest that these mutations result in an abnormally stable SMAD4 protein that
remains active in the cell longer than it is needed. These mutations are classified as
"gain-of-function" because they enhance the activity of the SMAD4 protein. Increased
availability of active SMAD4 allows the protein more time to interact with other
proteins and may result in abnormal TGF-β signaling in many cell types, which affects
development of several body systems and leads to the signs and symptoms of Myhre
syndrome.

**Cholangiocarcinoma**

**Cancers**

People with mutations in the *SMAD4* gene appear to have an increased risk of
developing various cancers. Some of these gene mutations are inherited, while
others are acquired during a person's lifetime. Such acquired (somatic) mutations
are present only in certain cells. Cells with mutations in the *SMAD4* gene, whether
inherited or somatic, may proliferate out of control and result in a tumor, often in the
colon or pancreas.

**Other disorders**

*SMAD4* gene mutations have also been identified in a small number of individuals
with juvenile polyposis and blood vessel abnormalities other than hereditary
hemorrhagic telangiectasia (described above). These abnormalities include
weakening and stretching (dilation) of the aorta, which is the large blood vessel that
distributes blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Aortic dilation may lead to a
bulge in the blood vessel wall (an aneurysm), or may cause the aortic valve to leak,
which can result in a sudden tearing of the layers in the aorta wall (aortic dissection).
Aortic aneurysm and dissection can be life-threatening. Impaired functioning of the
mitral valve, which connects two of the four chambers of the heart, has also been
seen in combination with juvenile polyposis caused by SMAD4 gene mutations.

Chromosomal Location
Cytogenetic Location: 18q21.2, which is the long (q) arm of chromosome 18 at position
21.2

Molecular Location: base pairs 51,030,213 to 51,085,042 on chromosome 18 (Homo
sapiens Updated Annotation Release 109.20191205, GRCh38.p13) (NCBI)

Credit: Genome Decoration Page/NCBI

Other Names for This Gene
- DPC4
- JIP
- MAD (mothers against decapentaplegic, Drosophila) homolog 4
- MAD, mothers against decapentaplegic homolog 4
- MAD, mothers against decapentaplegic homolog 4 (Drosophila)
- MADH4
- Mothers against decapentaplegic, Drosophila, homolog of, 4
- SMAD, mothers against DPP homolog 4 (Drosophila)
- SMAD4_HUMAN
Additional Information & Resources

Educational Resources

• Cancer Medicine (sixth edition, 2003): Familial Juvenile Polyposis Coli
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK12959/#A4571

• Developmental Biology (sixth edition, 2000): The Smad Pathway Activated by
  TGF-β Superfamily Ligands
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK10043/figure/A1057/

• Genomes (second edition, 2002): SMAD Signaling in Vertebrates
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK21127/box/A7928/#A7929

  Control.
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK21526/

Clinical Information from GeneReviews

• Hereditary Hemorrhagic Telangiectasia
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK1351

• Juvenile Polyposis Syndrome
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK1469

• Myhre Syndrome
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK425723

Scientific Articles on PubMed

• PubMed
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=%28%28SMAD4%5BTIAB%5D
  %29+%29+OR+%28MADH4%29%29+AND+%28%28Genes%5BMH%5D%29+OR+
  %28Genetic+Phenomena%5BMH%5D%29+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND
  +human%5Bmh%5D+AND+%22last+360+days%22+AND+human%5Bdp%5D

Catalog of Genes and Diseases from OMIM

• SMAD FAMILY MEMBER 4
  http://omim.org/entry/600993

Research Resources

• Atlas of Genetics and Cytogenetics in Oncology and Haematology
  http://atlasgeneticsoncology.org/Genes/SMAD4ID371.html

• ClinVar
  https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/clinvar?term=SMAD4%5Bgene%5D

• HGNC Gene Symbol Report
Sources for This Summary


  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11920286 
  Free article on PubMed Central: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC447611/

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22158539

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31837202

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27302097

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22585601

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31595668

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15264272

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16436638 
  Free article on PubMed Central: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1867574/

• OMIM: SMAD FAMILY MEMBER 4 
  http://omim.org/entry/600993

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28406602
  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23239472
  Free article on PubMed Central: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3535513/

  Citation on PubMed: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11583957
  Free article on PubMed Central: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1850516/

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