

Warts and all: Researchers reconstruct face of Cro-Magnon man

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The reconstructed Cro-Magnon man. Credit: CHARLIER / VISUALFORENSIC / UVSQ / VIA AFP-JIJI

Cro-Magnon man had a face covered in lumps including a large one on his forehead—likely benign tumours caused by a genetic disease, according to a team of French researchers in new findings published Friday.

The skeleton of [Cro-Magnon 1](#), a male Homo sapiens dating back 28,000 years, was discovered in 1868 in the Eyzies cave in France's southwestern Dordogne region.

To mark 150 years since the discovery of the bones, a team of researchers including anthropologist Philippe Charlier reexamined the remains.

At the end of their investigation, "we proposed a new diagnosis: he had suffered from a type of neurofibromatosis," Charlier told AFP.

Neurofibromatosis is a genetic disease which can cause benign tumours to develop in the nervous system, and also spots or areas of pigmentation on the skin.

The team's findings will be published Friday in the [medical journal](#) *The Lancet*.

Cro-Magnon man's skull "has a lesion on the forehead which corresponds to the presence of a neurofibroma (a benign nerve sheath tumor)" which has eroded the bone, Charlier said.

"His left ear canal was also damaged, presumably also by a [tumour](#) that had grown," he added.

Equipped with this diagnosis, "we have made a realistic reconstruction

of the face of this middle-aged man, taking into account his pathology".

The visual forensic reconstruction shows a face covered in tumours, including a large one on the forehead and scores more little nodules across his face, in particular clustered around the mouth, nose and eyes.

"He has them everywhere," Charlier said.

More information: Philippe Charlier et al. Did Cro-Magnon 1 have neurofibromatosis type 1?, *The Lancet* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)30495-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)30495-1)

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