

PublisherInfo		
PublisherName	:	BioMed Central
PublisherLocation	:	London
PublisherImprintName	:	BioMed Central

## Slimy catenins

ArticleInfo		
ArticleID	:	3857
ArticleDOI	:	10.1186/gb-spotlight-20001211-01
ArticleCitationID	:	spotlight-20001211-01
ArticleSequenceNumber	:	294
ArticleCategory	:	Research news
ArticleFirstPage	:	1
ArticleLastPage	:	2
ArticleHistory	:	RegistrationDate : 2000-12-11 OnlineDate : 2000-12-11
ArticleCopyright	:	BioMed Central Ltd2000
ArticleGrants	:	
ArticleContext	:	130591111

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In the 7 December *Nature* Grimson *et al.* report that, like metazoans, the slime mold *Dictyostelium discoideum* has a  $\beta$ -catenin involved both in [signaling](#) and in forming [adherens junctions](#) (*Nature* 2000, **408**:727-731). The junctions form after the unicellular amoebae are starved and aggregate into a fruiting body, with junctions present only between cells at a constriction near the top of the stalk tube. In mutants lacking the  $\beta$ -catenin, most of the fruiting bodies collapse, and there is an additional signaling defect: a cell-autonomous failure to induce certain aspects of prespore gene expression. The existence of the *Dictyostelium* protein and a related protein in the plant *Arabidopsis thaliana* suggest that evolution of  $\beta$ -catenin may have been a prerequisite for all multicellular development.

## References

1. *Nature*, [<http://www.nature.com/nature/>]
2. Functional interaction of beta-catenin with the transcription factor LEF-1.
3. The molecular constituents of intercellular junctions.