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his phylogenetic tree depicts the relationships between members of the complete superfamily of human protein kinases. Protein kinases constitute one of the largest human gene families and are key regulators of cell function. The 518 human protein kinases control protein activity by catalyzing the addition of a negatively charged phosphate group to other proteins. Protein kinases modulate a wide variety of biological processes, especially those that carry signals from the cell membrane to intracellular targets and coordinate complex biological functions.

Most protein kinases belong to a single superfamily of enzymes whose catalytic domains are related in sequence and structure. The main diagram illustrates the similarity between the protein sequences of these catalytic domains. Each kinase is at the tip of a branch, and the similarity between various kinases is inversely related to the distance between their positions on the tree diagram. Most kinases fall into small families of highly related sequences, and most

families are part of larger groups. The seven major groups are labeled and colored distinctly. Other kinases are shown in the center of the tree, colored gray. The relationships shown on the tree can be used to predict protein substrates and biological function for many of the over 100 uncharacterized kinases presented here.

The inset diagram shows trees for seven atypical protein kinase families. These proteins have verified or strongly predicted kinase activity, but have little or no sequence similarity to members of the protein kinase superfamily. A further eight atypical protein kinases in small families of one or two genes are not shown.







