

# Women Are 'Genetically Programmed' to Cheat, Study Says

It would have been smart for ancestral women to have a 'back-up' mate, researchers say.



By Rachel Dicker, Associate Editor, Social Media    Aug. 23, 2016, at 2:05 p.m.



**CHEATING IS FROWNED** upon in modern society, but would it still be as condemned if it were rooted in evolutionary biology?

According to a study published in [Personality and Individual Differences](#), switching mates was of evolutionary value to ancestral women and may predispose heterosexual women to seek alternate partners.

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"Nothing in life comes with a guarantee. From an ancestral woman's perspective, hazards from the environment, other species, and importantly, other humans, could render her mate debilitated or dead," the study explains. "Mate-switching mechanisms would benefit a woman by motivating her to pursue the highest value partners she could attract and retain."

Heterosexual men also have an [evolutionary root](#) for a wandering eye – the more women they inseminate, the wider their genes will spread.

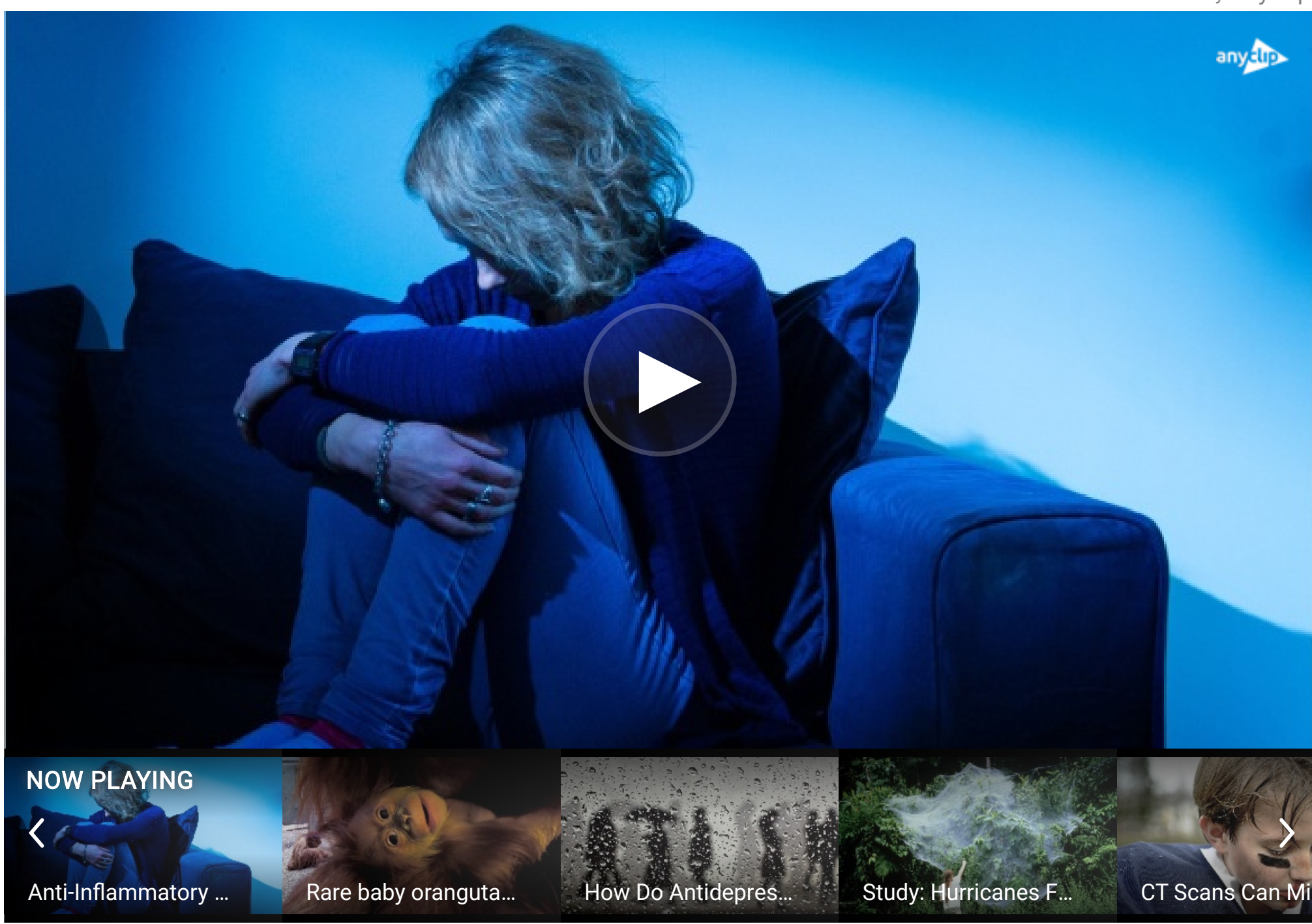
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"Breaking up with one partner and mating with another may more accurately characterize the common, perhaps the primary, mating strategy of humans," Dr. David Buss, the lead author of the study, told the [Sunday Times](#). "Affairs serve as a form of mate insurance, keeping a back-up mate should a switch become warranted in the future."

"Ancestral women lacking a back-up mate would have suffered a lapse in protection, and resources," Buss added.

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