

Roma Maria's blond hair, pale skin explained by albino gene

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Doctors claimed on Saturday that the blond hair and fair skin of Greece's mystery girl Maria and several other children of her Bulgarian Roma parents, is explained by the genetic condition of albinism.

Sofia medical academy professor Draga Toncheva told AFP: "Albinism is due to a genetic disorder characterised by lack of [skin](#), eye and [hair](#) pigmentation. The children that I saw on television carry the signs of this rare condition,"

According to Toncheva, [albinism](#) results from the combination of recessive genetic features from the parents that are passed onto the child.

Albinos usually have very white and sensitive skin that burns easily in the sun, red or very pale blue eyes, white-blond hair, eyelashes and eyebrows, as well as vision defects such as astigmatism, Toncheva explained.

Maria's appearance had prompted Greek authorities to remove her from the dark-complexioned Roma family she lived with, assuming that she had been abducted.

An international effort to find her real parents however led authorities to another Roma family in Bulgaria, raising alarm about racial profiling.

DNA tests showed on Friday that Sasha Ruseva and her husband Atanas were the child's real [parents](#).

Both of them have dark complexions and brownish-black hair and eyes.

However, five of their other nine children closely resemble Maria. They are all blond, fair-skinned and freckled, with pale bluish or reddish eyes and white eyelashes.

Atanas's brother Filip has meanwhile confirmed that two of their uncles carry the same features.

Bulgaria is currently compiling a registry of people with what it considers rare diseases and could include Maria and her brothers and sisters on it, Toncheva said.

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