Title

Phylogenetic diversity of the carbon monoxide-utilizing prokaryotes and their

divergent carbon monoxide metabolisms in the human gut microbiome

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Abstract

Although the production of toxic CO within the human body has been detected, only a

few CO-utilizing prokaryotes (CO utilizers) have been reported in the human gut, and

their phylogenetic and physiological diversity remains unclear. Here, we unveiled more

than thousand representative genomes originating from previously unexplored potential

CO-utilizing prokaryotes, which contain CO dehydrogenase (CODH) genes. More than

half of CODH-bearing prokaryotes possess genes for the autotrophic Wood–Ljungdahl

pathway (WLP). However, 79% of these prokaryotes commonly lack a key gene for

WLP, which encodes enzyme that synthesizes formate from CO_2 and reductants such as

H_2, suggesting that they share a degenerated WLP. Instead, many were predicted to

possess an alternative way of synthesizing formate from pyruvate, which is a product of

glycolysis. In addition to degenerated WLP, seven genes neighboring the CODH gene

were found, which may reflect diverse utilization of CO in the human gut. Our findings

reveal the unique and diverse nature of CO metabolism in the human gut microbiome,

suggesting its potential contribution to CO consumption and gut homeostasis.

Impact statement

Carbon monoxide (CO)-utilizing prokaryotes mitigate the toxic impact of CO by

consuming it as energy and/or carbon sources. In addition to various environments, CO

is also produced via multiple routes, such as heme degradation, in the human body and

accumulates in the gut. Revealing CO-utilizing prokaryotes and their CO metabolisms

in the human gut would contribute to gaining insight into how microbial community

functions are involved in maintaining human gut homeostasis. Nevertheless, the limited

number of CO utilizers in the human gut microbiome have been reported. In our study, a

significant proportion of human gut microbial genomes belonging to diverse phyla were

revealed to be of potential CO-utilizing prokaryotes. Additionally, the majority of CO-

utilizing prokaryote genomes in the human gut have potentially remodeled the Wood–

Ljungdahl pathway (WLP), one of the most well-known autotrophic pathways, to the

degenerated, heterotrophic form. Moreover, there were seven other genes neighboring

CODH in the human gut CO-utilizers, suggesting various CO utilization. Our findings

would pave the way for future explorations into microbial metabolic adaptations and

their implications for human health.

Data summary

The human gut prokaryote genomes were downloaded from HumGut database (Hiseni

et al. 2021; https://arken.nmbu.no/~larssn/humgut/). The accession numbers of

53 CODH/ACS-bearing genomes from environments without host-association (Inoue *et al*.,

54 2022) are listed in Table S1. Metatranscriptomic datasets were downloaded from the

55 NCBI Sequence Read Archive (SRA) under the Bioproject accession numbers

56 PRJNA354235 and PRJNA707065 and their accession IDs are listed in Table S2.

Introduction

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that is toxic to many organisms (Ernst and Zibrak 1998). CO has a 200–250 times higher affinity for hemoproteins, such as hemoglobin and cytochrome *c*, than oxygen. Therefore, exposure to >100 ppm of CO inhibits oxygen transport and respiration, resulting in severe effects on human health (Ernst and Zibrak 1998; Alonso *et al.* 2003; Prockop and Chichkova 2007). Nevertheless, the human body produces 16.4–160 µmol, which correspond to 0.5–4.5 ppm, of CO per hour on average, primarily through heme degradation using heme oxygenase-1 (Morse and Choi 2005; Onyiah *et al.* 2014; Hopper *et al.* 2020). From the human body and exogenous sources, CO accumulates in the gastrointestinal tract, potentially influencing the composition of intestinal microbiota (Hopper et al. 2020).

Prokaryotes utilizing CO are called CO utilizers and have been found in various environments, including soil (Suzuki *et al.* 1983), lake (Leigh *et al.* 1981), freshwater lake sediments (Imaura *et al.* 2023), bioreactors (Hattori *et al.* 2000), hot springs (Svetlichny *et al.* 1991), deep hydrothermal vents (Moussard *et al.* 2004), and even gut environment (Trischler *et al.* 2022). All CO utilizers possess CO dehydrogenase (CODH), which catalyzes the reversible conversion of CO_2 and CO ($CO_2 + 2H^+ + 2e^-$

<=> $CO_2 + H_2O$) (Oelgeschläger and Rother 2008; Sokolova *et al.* 2009). CODHs are

physiologically and structurally diverse enzymes that form two major groups, namely

nickel- and molybdenum-containing CODHs (Ni-CODH and Mo-CODH); of which,

Ni-CODH works under anaerobic conditions (Ragsdale 2004). The catalytic subunit of

Mo-CODH (CoxL) is phylogenetically classified into two groups, form I and II,

whereas that of Ni-CODH (CooS and CdhA) is phylogenetically and structurally

classified into eight distinct clades, A to H, and mini-CODH (Inoue *et al.* 2019, 2022).

Through reactions catalyzed by the abovementioned CODHs, CO utilizers utilize

CO as a carbon source and/or as the low redox potential ($E^{0'}= -520$ mV) for carbon

fixation and/or energy conservation in various CO metabolizing pathways and

respiratory chains. For instance, through the reduction and oxidation of the ferredoxin-

like protein CooF and flavin adenine dinucleotide-dependent NAD(P) oxidoreductase

(FNOR), the reducing power of CO is supplied to NAD^+, thereby generating NADH,

which is available for various respiration and biosynthesis reactions (Tian *et al.* 2016;

Inoue *et al.* 2019; Slobodkin *et al.* 2019). The reducing power of CO is also supplied to

various terminal electron acceptors, including proton, nitrate, and oxygen, in the

electron transport chains to generate an electrochemical gradient for ATP synthesis

(Oelgeschläger and Rother 2008; Slobodkin *et al.* 2019; Adachi *et al.* 2020).

Among the CO-mediated CO_2 fixation pathways, the Wood-Lijungdahl pathway

(WLP; reductive acetyl-CoA pathway) has been best studied. The WLP is recognized as

the most ancient autotrophic pathway, which was possessed by the last universal

common ancestor (LUCA) (Schuchmann and Müller 2014; Weiss *et al.* 2016; Adam *et*

al. 2018). This pathway consists of two branches, carbonyl and methyl branches

(Ragsdale and Pierce 2008; Adam *et al.* 2018). In the carbonyl branch, CO_2 is reduced

to CO by Ni-CODH and incorporated into the carbonyl moiety of acetyl-CoA.

Alternatively, CO can be obtained directly from the surrounding environment and

incorporated into the carbonyl branch (Ragsdale 2008). In the methyl branch, formate is

synthesized from CO_2 and reductants such as H_2 by formate dehydrogenase (Fdh),

which are then reduced stepwise to a methyl moiety (CH_3-) by formyl-tetrahydrofolate

synthase (Fhs), methylene-tetrahydrofolate dehydrogenase/cyclohydrolase (FolD), and

methylene-tetrahydrofolate reductase (MetF). The generated carbonyl and methyl

moieties are incorporated into acetyl-CoA along with coenzyme A (CoA) by acetyl-

CoA synthase (ACS), which forms a complex with Ni-CODH (CODH/ACS). Acetyl-

CoA is then converted into various compounds such as short-chain fatty acids (SCFA),

including acetate, by CO utilizers (Miller and Wolin 1996; Trischler *et al.* 2022). In

many of these acetogenic CO utilizers, WLP is linked to energy conservation using Rnf

complexes and/or energy-converting hydrogenase (Ech), where the oxidation of reduced

ferredoxin is coupled with the reduction of NAD^+ and protons, respectively (Diender *et*

al. 2015; Schoelmerich and Müller 2019).

Although the CO-utilizing abilities of human gut prokaryotes have not yet been

fully elucidated, accumulating evidence suggests that CO utilizers are present in the

human gut microbiome. Recently, two human gut bacteria, *Blautia luti* and *B. wexlerae*,

were found to consume CO via the WLP when formate was added to the medium

(Trischler *et al.* 2022). Furthermore, several gastrointestinal prokaryotes such as

Clostridioides and *Marvinbryantia* possess genes for WLP (Wolin *et al.* 2003; Yao *et al.*

2023). However, the diversity of CO utilizers and their metabolic pathways in the

human gut remain poorly understood.

With the advancement of sequencing technologies and bioinformatic tools,

extensive databases of human gut prokaryotic genomes have been established. Almeida

et al. (2021) created a Unified Human Gastrointestinal Genome (UHGG) collection

comprising 204,938 non-redundant genomes. Hiseni *et al.* (2021) screened more than

5,700 healthy human gut metagenomes and constructed HumGut, a genome collection

containing over 381,000 genomes. Analyzing these databases would deepen our

understanding of human intestinal prokaryotes, including CO utilizers and uncultured

prokaryotes, which are dominant in the human gut (Almeida *et al.* 2019, 2021; Omae *et*

al. 2019). In this study, we used the HumGut database to investigate CO utilizers and

their CO-utilizing pathways in the human gut microbiome.

Methods

Genome sources

Publicly available genome collection, HumGut (Hiseni *et al.* 2021), was used as a

source   of   human   gut   prokaryote   genomes   (downloaded   from:

https://arken.nmbu.no/~larssn/humgut/). In the database, >381,000 genomes detected

from 3,534 healthy human gut metagenome samples were clustered into 30,691

representative genomes at 97.5% sequence identity. The previously reported WLP-

bearing bacterial genomes without host asscociation (Inoue *et al*. 2022) were utilized

and listed in Table S1. Metatranscriptomic datasets derived from 110 different healthy

individuals were downloaded from the NCBI Sequence Read Archive (SRA) under the

Bioproject accession numbers PRJNA354235 and PRJNA707065 (Table S2).

Detection of *cooS* and *coxL* in human gut prokaryote genomes

CODH-bearing genomes were searched from 30,691 representative human gut

prokaryotic genomes, using *cooS* and *coxL* as genetic markers for Ni- and Mo-CODHs,

respectively. The homology search was performed using NCBI blast+ 2.13.0 with

cutoffs of an E-value of 10^{-10}, a sequence length of 200 aa, and a sequence identity of

30%, using the following amino acid sequences as queries: clades A–H CODHs and

mini CODH from *Methanosarcina barkeri* CODH/ACS α subunit (WP_011305243.1),

Butyrivibrio sp. CooS (WP_026514536.1), *Clostridium novyi* CooS (WP_039226206.1),

Carboxydothermus hydrogenoformans CooSV (WP_011342982.1), *Thermococcus*

onnurineus   CooS   (WP_012571978.1),   *C.   hydrogenoformans*   CooSII

(WP_011343033.1),   *Deltaproteobacteria   bacterium*   RBG_16_49_23   CooS

(OGP75751.1),   Candidatus   Atribacteria   bacterium   HGW-Atribacteria-1   CooS

(PKP59679.1), and *Thermosinus carboxydivorans* mini CooS (WP_007288589.1),

respectively (Inoue *et al*., 2019, 2022; Techtmann *et al*., 2012). The Ni-CODH clades of

the detected CooS were determined by their amino acid sequence identity with

representative CooS sequences. The detected CooS/CoxL sequences were aligned using

MAFFT v7.487 with the E-INS-i application (Katoh and Standley 2013). To examine

the motifs of CooS, previously used criteria (Inoue *et al.* 2019) were adopted: no amino

acid substitutions in two C-clusters comprising Ni, Fe, and S; a B-cluster comprising

cubane-type 4Fe-4S; and a D-cluster comprising an additional 4Fe-4S at the subunit

interface (Dobbek et al., 2001; Doukov *et al.* 2002; Inoue *et al.* 2019). A similar

analysis was performed for CoxL with slight modifications. A homology search was

performed using *Oligotropha carboxidovorans* CoxL (WP_013913730.1) as the query.

The sequences that conserved the Form I CoxL active site (AYRCSFR) (King 2003)

alone were selected. The detected Ni-CODHs are listed in Table S3. All genomes

containing Ni-CODHs are listed in Table S4.

Phylogenetic tree construction

The taxonomic assignment of 30,691 prokaryotic genomes was performed using

GTDB-tk v2.1.1, with the reference data version R207 (Chaumeil *et al.* 2019). The

names of the phyla were corrected according to the method described by Oren and

Garrity (2021). Genome distances among the *cooS*-containing genomes were calculated

using Mashtree v1.2.0 with 1,000 replicates and a minimum depth value of 0 (Ondov *et*

al. 2016; Katz *et al.* 2019). The obtained tree was then visualized using the R package,

ggtree v3.2.1 (Yu *et al.* 2017). Of the 3,534 human gut metagenome samples (Hiseni *et*

al. 2021), the number of metagenome samples, from which the bacterial genomes were

detected with 95% or higher identity, was displayed as a heatmap on the outer layer of

the phylogenetic tree.

Genome-based prediction of metabolic functions

To characterize the metabolic functions of the CO utilizer in the human gut, three

groups of genomes were analyzed using METABOLIC v4.0 (Zhou *et al.* 2022). The

first group comprised the CODH-bearing genomes detected in the HumGut database.

The second group comprised the non-CODH-bearing genomes of human gut

prokaryotes belonging to a family or order with CODH-bearing genomes, that were

detected in the HumGut database. The third group comprised the CODH/ACS-bearing

bacteria found in environments other than the intestine. The proportions of genomes

encoding functions in each genus were calculated for each group. From the HumGut

database, we selected Ni-CODH-lacking bacterial genomes belonging to orders or

families containing Ni-CODH-bearing bacteria, resulting in 194 genomes (the second

group). We also utilized Ni-CODH-bearing bacterial MAG datasets constructed by

Inoue et al. (2022). Among the genomes, only the 554 genomes with bacterial

CODH/ACS and without "host-associated" tag were used in this analysis. The accession

ID of the genomes are listed in Table S1.

Characterization of gene compositions in the *cooS* genomic contexts

Protein-coding genes in the genomes were predicted using Prodigal v2.6.3, with

default settings (Hyatt *et al.* 2012). The gene functions were then annotated to the

protein coding sequences using eggNOG-mapper v2.1.5 (Cantalapiedra *et al.* 2021). For

double-checking, a homology search of the protein-coding sequences against the

clusters of orthologous gene (COG) database was performed using DIAMOND

BLASTp v 2.0.12 (Buchfink *et al.* 2021). The KEGG orthology (KO) and COGs of 15

genes located in the upstream and downstream of the CooS loci were then extracted and

are listed in Tables S5 and S6, respectively. Previously reported CODH-related COGs

were also referred: AcsB (COG1614), CooF (COG0437 or COG1142), FNOR

(COG1251), ECH (COG3260 and COG3261), and ABC transporter (COG0600,

COG1116, and COG0715) (Inoue *et al.* 2019). The gene maps around *cooS* were

visualized using the R package gggenomes v0.9.5.9000 (Hackl and Ankenbrand 2022).

Genomic-based predictions of the degenerated WLP

In the present study, the gene composition of the CODH/ACS-bearing genomes

was analyzed. Genomes that possessed both CooS and AcsB (K14138) were termed

CODH/ACS-bearing genomes. All the KOs annotated to bacterial genomes in the

human gut and other environments were listed, and the presence of each KO was

checked in each genome to calculate the proportion of genomes carrying a given gene in

each genome group. When two or more KOs were annotated to a single gene, all

annotated KOs were considered for calculating the proportion. Since K00656 (PflD)

contains members of PFL-like proteins without PFL activity, proteins annotated as

K00656 were aligned using MAFFT v7.487 with the E-INS-i application, and only the

sequences that conserved the Cys-Cys active sites (Sawers and Watson 1998) were

regarded as potential PFL-coding sequences. The proportions of the genomes carrying

the given genes are listed in Table S7. Especially, the proportion of genomes carrying

the following genes were extracted from the obtained results: CO metabolism-related

genes (*cooC*, K07321; *cooF*, K00196), ACS subunits (*acsB–E*, K14138, K00197,

K00194, K15023; *cdhC*, K00193), WLP (*fhs*, K01938; *folD*, K01491; *metF*, K00297;

metV, K25007), Rnf subunits (*rnfA–G*, KO03612–17; *rnfC2*, K25008), *ech* (K15830,

K15832), Hdr (*hdrA–C*, K03388–90), Mvh (*mvhD*, K14127), and PFOR (*por*, K03737;

porA–D, K00169–72). In addition, formate-related genes were searched in the KO

database and KEGG reaction database by inserting the keyword, "formate."

Hydrogenases were omitted from the results and other genes were checked as the

formate-related proteins: formate transporters (FocB, K03459; FocA, K06212; OxlT,

K08177; YfdC, K21990; FdhC, and K21993), formate dehydrogenase catalytic subunits

(FdhA, K05299; FdhF, K22015; and FdoG, K00123) and the other subunits of formate

dehydrogenase (K00122–27, K22515, and K22516), PFL (K04069 and K00656), and

other 55 genes. Genes that were not present in any genome were removed from the

figure.

Taxonomic and functional profiling of metatranscriptomes

Publicly available metatranscriptome datasets of healthy human were retrieved from the

SRA database. Among the 110 datasets, 96 datasets were sourced from BioProject

PRJNA354235, which includes samples from healthy adult men from United States

aged 40–75 years old (Abu-Ali *et al*. 2018), while 14 datasets were sourced from

BioProject PRJNA707065, which includes samples from mothers and their six-month-

old infants from New Zealand or United Kingdom under the NiPPeR Study

(https://www.nipperstudy.com/). Sequence reads were processed using KneadData

v0.12.0 (http://huttenhower.sph.harvard.edu/kneaddata). In KneadData, the quality

control pipeline was set as follows: FastQC v0.12.1

(https://www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/fastqc/) was employed before and

after quality controls, adaptor trimming was performed with default settings, reads were

filtered by Trimmomatic v0.35 (Bolger, Lohse and Usadel 2014) with a sliding window

sizes of four and a minimum quality score of 20, Tandem Repeats Finder (TRF) v4.09

(Benson 1999) was employed with default parameters, and human host RNA (Hg38)

and rRNA sequences (Silva v128) were removed using Bowtie2 v2.5.2 (Langmead and

Salzberg 2012). Trimmed non-human reads were subsequently mapped to (i) the 1,380

of human gut non-redundant CODH mRNA sequences identified in this study, (ii) the

30,691 human gut prokaryotic genomes in the HumGut database, and (iii) Fdh genes of

B. schinkii (JANSWJ010000003.1:269667-271859) and *B. hydrogenotrophica*

(NZ_CYXL01000001.1:c262854-260023) using CoverM v0.6.1

(https://github.com/wwood/CoverM).

Results

CODH was possessed by 4.2% of human gut prokaryotic genomes

In the present study, we analyzed human gut prokaryotic genomes from the

HumGut database (Hiseni *et al.*, 2021). The genomes in the HumGut database were

clustered into 30,691 genomes with 97.5% sequence identity (Hiseni *et al.*, 2021). Prior

to exploring CO utilizers in the human gut, 30,691 representative genomes were

taxonomically classified using GTDB-tk (Chaumeil *et al*. 2019), and 98% of the gut

genomes belonged to the phyla Bacillota (19,877 genomes), Bacteroidota (4,011),

Actinobacteriota (3,676), Pseudomonadota (1,905), Campylobacterota (227), and

Thermodesulfobacteriota (259) (Fig. 1a). The dominant orders in the Bacillota phylum

were Oscillospirales (8,642), Lachnospirales (3,608), Christensenellales (1,476),

Lactobacillales (1,423), and Veillonellales (1,279) (Fig. 1a).

To identify CO utilizers in the human gut, genes for the catalytic subunit of Ni-

CODH clades A–G (*cdhA* and *cooS*) and mini CODH were used as markers for CO

utilizers. As a result of homology search, 2,505 amino acid sequences encoded by 2,202

genomes were detected as candidate Ni-CODHs. Of these, Ni-CODHs were further

filtered using the following criterion: no amino acid substitutions or deletions in the

conserved motifs of the CODH of the five metal clusters and two acid-base catalysts

(Inoue *et al.* 2019). Consequently, 1,380 amino acid sequences in 1,302 genomes were

confirmed to conserve Ni-CODH motifs. Most of the genomes contained one Ni-CODH

gene (1,231/1,302 CODH-bearing genomes), whereas other genomes contained two or

more genes (Fig. 1b). The detected 1,380 Ni-CODHs belonged to clades B (493), C

(179), D (14), E (692) and F (1) and mini CODH (1) (Fig. 1c). Although a similar

survey was conducted for Mo-CODH using CoxL as a marker, Mo-CODH, which

possesses a conserved active site for form I CoxL, was not found in any human gut

genome.

Among the 1,302 CODH-bearing genomes, the phylum Bacillota comprised 1, 223

(94%). The remaining 79 genomes were identified as Actinobacteriota, Bacteroidota,

Campylobacterota, Thermodesulfobacteriota, Pseudomonadota, Synergistota, and

Verrucomicrobiota (Fig. 1d, e). The 1,223 Bacillota- and 79 other phyla-derived

genomes belonged to 248 species, 82 genera, and 8 phyla.

Among the 1,223 Bacillota-derived genomes, 379, 341, and 411 belonged to

Lachnospirales, Veillonel l ales, and Oscillospirales, respectively; thus, a large

proportion of the CODH-bearing genomes were occupied by these three orders (Fig. 1d).

CODH-bearing genomes accounted for 10.5%, 26.7%, and 4.8% of the total human gut

microbial genomes derived from the orders Lachnospirales, Veillonelalles, and

Oscillospirales, respectively. Within the order Lachnospirales, 38 genera possessed

CODH, including *Blautia* (154/291; 154 Ni-CODH-bearing genomes within 291 of the

total genomes of the genus in the human gut microbiome), *Fusicatenibacter* (67/215),

Ruminococcus (29/1,194), *Enterocloster* (21/56), *Anaerobutyricum* (12/30), and

UMGS1375 (10/11). Of these, *Blautia* was previously identified as possessing

functional WLP (Trischler *et al.* 2022) and was the only taxon to possess three CODHs

(HumGut ID: 13241, 3275, 5110, 12728, 20698, 11367, and 8982) (Fig. 1b). In *Blautia*,

24 of 154 CODH-bearing genomes contained two or more CODH genes. The

Veillonelalles with Ni-CODH genes consisted of three genera: *Veillonella* (323/443),

Megasphaera (12/96), and F0422 (7/12). *Veillonella* is a ubiquitous bacterium found in

the human body, such as in the oral cavity and gut (Rogosa 1964). The order

Oscillospirales contains 13 genera that encode Ni-CODHs in their genomes, including

Faecousia (282/446), CAG-170 (82/179), and CAG-353 (20/60) (Table S4). Although

Oscillospirales occupies a higher proportion of the human gut CODH-bearing genome,

most of these bacteria are uncultured; therefore, their physiological characteristics are

largely unknown. CODH-bearing genomes were also identified in the Bacillota orders

Peptostreptococcales (41/239) and Selenomonadales (27/135) as well as in the

Actinobacteriota order Coriobacteriales (23/3,050) (Table S4).

To assess the prevalence of potential CO utilizers in humans, we checked for the

presence of CODH-bearing genomes among the available 3,534 datasets of healthy

human gut metagenomes (Hiseni *et al*., 2021) (Fig. 1e). The CODH-bearing genomes

derived from the Lachnospirales genera *Fusicatenibacter* and *Blautia* were present in

48% and 26% of the metagenome datasets, respectively. The Veillonelalles genera

Veillonella was detected in 8.3% of the metagenome datasets (Fig. 1e, Table S4). The

Oscillospirales genera *Faecousia* and CAG-170 were detected in 13% and 18% of the

metagenome datasets, respectively. The above CODH-bearing genomes were appeared

more prevalent than or as prevalent as the two prominent CODH-lacking Bacteroidales

genera, *Phocaeicola* and *Bacteroides* (Hiseni *et al.* 2021), which were detected in the

18% and 31% metagenome datasets on average, respectively. In contrast, some CODH-

bearing genomes were present in only a limited number of the human gut metagenome

datasets (Fig. 1e, Table S4). For instance, the CODH-bearing genomes from the genus

Eubacterium in the order Eubacteriales were found in only 0.2% of metagenomes on

average.

Majority of CODH-bearing bacteria were acetate-producing prokaryotes in the

human gut

As most of the potential CO utilizers detected in this study have been uncultured

and thereby uncharacterized, we reconstructed the genome-based metabolic functions of

the potential CO utilizers bearing Ni-CODH genes in the human gut microbiome using

METABOLIC v4.0 (Zhou *et al.* 2022). Twenty-three metabolic functions were detected

in the potential human gut CO utilizers, and the acetate production function was

conserved among them (Fig. S1). In particular, the analysis revealed that 1,162/1,302

Ni-CODH-bearing human gut genomes, which correspond to 73/82 genera, contained

genes for acetate production (*acdA*, *ack*, and *pta*) for fermentation, suggesting that most

potential CO utilizers produce acetate in the human gut (Fig. S1). Exceptions were the

Selenomonadales genera (*Centipeda*, *Mitsuokella*, and *Selenomonas*), whose all 27

genomes lacked the abovementioned genes for acetate production.

To evaluate whether these functions were specific to potential CO utilizers, we

compared the metabolic functions of 1,302 Ni-CODH-bearing human gut microbial

genomes to those of 194 Ni-CODH-lacking genomes that were closely related to the Ni-

CODH-bearing ones. All functions other than CO metabolism were observed in both

types of genomes; thus, we could not find any specific metabolic functions in the

potential CO utilizers (Fig. S1). This suggests that CO metabolism may be engaged in

accessory functions that support the existing functions conserved in both Ni-CODH-

bearing and Ni-CODH-lacking human gut microbiomes.

Eight *cooS* genomic contexts were identified in the human gut prokaryote genomes

Genes that encode proteins involved in CO metabolism are often located close to

cooS in the genome, enabling the prediction of their physiological roles based on the

genomic context (Inoue *et al.* 2019; Matson *et al.* 2011; Techtmann *et al.* 2012). To gain

insight into the physiological roles of CO metabolism in the human gut microbiome, we

analyzed 15 genes located in the upstream and downstream regions of *cooS* in the 1,302

human gut microbial genomes (Fig. 2, Table S5, S6). Totally, 1,150 KOs and 1,285

COGs were annotated for genes within the 1,380 *cooS* contexts in the 1,302 genomes

(Tables S5 and S6). Genomic contexts were manually classified into eight types: WLP,

PEPCK, FNOR, ABC transporter, Fe-only hydrogenase, MFS transporter,

uncharacterized dehydrogenase, and Cysteine synthase. Below, we describe the

estimated physiological functions and detailed phylogenetic distributions of genomic

context types (Fig. 2).

The WLP type, characterized by the presence of the gene for ACS β subunit

(AcsB; K14138, COG1614), was the most prevalent in the human gut microbial

genomes, being detected from 593 of the 1,380 *cooS* contexts. The WLP context was

observed in Oscillospirales (8/13 genera, that is, eight CODH-bearing genera within the

total genera of the order; 323/411 CODH-bearing genomes, that is, 323 CODH genomes

within the total genomes of the order), Lachnospirales (18/38 genera, 198/379 genomes),

Peptostreptococcales (4/9 genera, 13/41 genomes), and Eubacterales *Eubacterium* (3/3

genomes). All genera conserved the consecutive gene arrangement of *cooS-cooC-acsB*,

except for the Peptostreptococcales genera, which had the gene arrangement of *cooS-*

cooC-fhs and *acsB* at 10 genes downstream of *cooS* (Tables S5 and S6). *acsCDE* was

found in the *cooS* contexts of the Lachnospirales and Peptostreptococcus genera but not

in seven out of eight Oscillospirales genera (Fig. 2, Table S5, S6).

The second type is PEPCK, which has been unpreceded in *cooS* genomic contexts.

PEPCK (*pckA*; K01610, COG1866) is a phosphoenolpyruvate carboxykinase that

catalyzes the conversion of phosphoenolpyruvate (PEP), CO_2, and ADP to oxaloacetate

(OAA) and ATP, and vice versa. The PEPCK type was found among the genomes of

Veillonelales genus *Veillonella* (189/342 genomes). Gene composition varied among

PEPCK-type genomic contexts. Of the 189 PEPCK-type genomic contexts of

Veillonella, 144 included a putative *oxyR*, which encodes a transcriptional regulator of

LysR family (K04761, COG0583) and responds to oxidative stress (Sen and Imlay

2021) in the upstream region adjacent to *cooS*. Genes for nitrate reduction (*narGHIJK*)

were also observed in 111 *Veillonella* PEPCK-type genomic contexts, of which 78

genomes also included *oxyR* (Fig. 2).

The third is FNOR type that has been predicted to be associated with CO

utilization in the previous studies (Geelhoed *et al.* 2016; Inoue *et al.* 2019, 2022).

FNOR (COG1251) is often present in the CO utilizers and is involved in energy

conservation through CO oxidation associated with the reduction of NAD(P)$^+$

(Geelhoed *et al.* 2016). In human gut microbial genomes, FNOR genes were found in

138 *cooS* contexts of bacteria, including Lachnospirales (15/38 genera, 92/379

genomes) and Peptostreptococcales (5/9 genera, 18/41 genomes) (Fig. 2).

The following types have been reported previously; however, their physiological

functions in CO metabolism are unknown: ABC transporters (K02049–51, COG0715-

COG0600-COG1116) were found in various bacteria, such as Lachnospirales (9/38

genera, 40/379 genomes), Campylobacterales *Campylobacter* (37/40 genomes), and

Selenomonadales *Selenomonas* (4/4 genomes) (Fig. 2). "Fe-only hydrogenase"

(COG4624) was encoded in Lachnospirales (9/38 genera, 43/379 genomes),

Oscillospirales (2/13 genera, 6/411 genomes), and Peptostreptococcus (2/9 genera, 4/56

genomes) (Fig. 2, Table S6). The COG4624 gene was located downstream region

adjacent to *cooS* in 24 of the 57 *cooS* genomic contexts with COG4624, including

contexts from Lachnospirales *Anaerobutyricum*. In 17 of these, *pflAB* (K04069 and K00656) was found within the genomic context of *cooS* (Fig. 2). In addition to the Fe-hydrogenase-type context, COG4624 was also found in the WLP-type context in 27 genomes.

"MFS transporter," "functionally uncharacterized dehydrogenase," and "Cysteine synthase" were relatively minor types, as they occupied fewer than 2% of the CODH-bearing genomes and were observed in specific taxa. The MFS transporter is responsible for importing or exporting a wide range of substrates across the membrane using a substrate concentration gradient. The MFS transporters encoded in this context were annotated as COG2223 (NarK, nitrate transporter) and K08177 (OxlT, oxalate/formate antiporter) in Selenomonadales *Mitsuokella* (16/20 genomes) (Fig. 2). In the functionally uncharacterized dehydrogenase context type, genes for K00004 (butanediol dehydrogenase) and COG1063 (threonine dehydrogenase or related Zn-dependent dehydrogenase) were found in the downstream region adjacent to *cooS* in Clostridiales *Clostridium* (11/15 CODH-bearing genomes), whereas genes for hydrogenase nickel incorporation protein (*hypAB*, K04651, and K04652), which may be involved in maturation of CooS, were present upstream of *cooS*. Cysteine synthase (CysK; K01738, COG0031) was mainly found in Veillonellales *Megasphaera* (11/12

genomes).

Fdh-lacking WLP is common in the human gut microbiome

As the WLP-type genomic context was the most prevalent among the 1,302

potential CO utilizers in the human gut, we further investigated whether human gut

prokaryotes bearing the WLP context were capable of acetyl-CoA synthesis through the

WLP. Since WLP could be functional even when *cooS* and *acsB* are not located in the

same genomic context (Gencic and Grahame 2020), we here referred to the 667

genomes bearing both *cooS* and *acsB* as CODH/ACS-bearing genomes regardless of

whether to retain them as the WLP type context. The presence of other WLP genes such

as *cooCF*, *fdh*, *fhs*, *folD*, *metF*, and *acsCDE* was surveyed in all the genomes containing

genes for CODH/ACS (667 genomes) (Fig. 3).

More than 88% of CODH/ACS-bearing genomes retained almost the full set of

WLP genes, including *acsCD*, *cooC*, *fhs*, *folD*, and *metF* (Fig. 3, Fig. S2). Interestingly,

acsE, a bacteria-specific gene for the methyltransferase subunits of ACS, was not

detected in 78% of the Oscillospirales genomes (7/9 genera) (Fig. 3), whereas *acsE* was

conserved in other CODH/ACS-bearing genomes. Although a nearly full set of WLP

genes was detected, we found that the Fdh genes for formate synthesis (*fdhA*, *fdhF*, and

fdoG) were not detected in 95%, 96%, and 79% of the CODH/ACS-bearing genomes,

respectively (Fig. 3), and any other types of the Fdh genes were observed in 79% of the

genomes. A previous study reported that two *Blautia* species are capable of CO

metabolism in the presence of external formate even though the bacteria lack Fdh

gene/activity (Trischler *et al.* 2022). In this study, the presence of Fdh genes were also

checked in the 554 CODH/ACS-bearing genomes found in other environments (Inoue *et*

al., 2022) (Fig. S2). It revealed that Fdh-lacking WLP is also present in the genomes of

other environments. However, compared to human gut microbial genomes with WLP

genes, Fdh genes (*fdhA*, *fdhF*, and *fdoG*) were missing in a smaller proportion of

bacteria of other environments (28%, 84%, and 17%, respectively) (Fig. S2), and none

of the Fdh genes was observed in 14% of the genomes. Thus, the lack of formate

synthesis might be a feature highly enriched in the human gut potential CO utilizer.

Similarly, *cooF* was not detected in 91% of the CODH/ACS-bearing genomes

(accounting for 26/42 genera), whereas *cooF* was absent in 53% of the bacteria isolated

from other environments (Fig. 3, Fig. S2).

The above analyses indicate that there may be CO_2/H_2-independent sources of

formate for human gut CODH/ACS-bearing bacteria. To estimate how formate is

obtained, we surveyed the genes involved in alternative formate synthesis or import by

CODH/ACS-bearing bacteria (Fig. 3). The Lachnospirales (16/21 genera, 145/239

genomes), a few Oscillospirales genera (2/9 genera), all Peptostreptococcus genera (5/5

genera, 22/26 genomes), and Verrucomicrobiales genera Akkermansia (1 genome)

contained *pflB* (Fig. 3). These genera are likely capable of producing formate from

pyruvate. Three Oscillospirales genera that lacked both *fdh* and *pfl* possessed a gene for

formate   transporters,   *fdhC*   (56/291   genomes)   (Fig.   3).   Two   Lachnospirales

(*Merdiplasma* and *Fusicatenibacter*) and two Oscillospirales genera (CAG-170 and

Faecousia) were not found to possess these genes. These genera possess genes encoding

proteins   involved   in   formate-producing/utilizing   reactions   such   as   GTP   degradation

(GCH1, *ribBA*) and thiamine metabolism (*thiC*) (Fig. 3).

To gain deeper insights into the functions specifically encoded in the human gut

microbial genomes with WLP, we compared all the genes in the genomes of human gut

bacteria and other environmental bacteria that contain WLP genes (Fig. S1, Table S7).

We observed that genes involved in carbohydrate and saccharide degradation were more

prevalent in the human gut microbiome containing WLP genes than in bacteria of other

environments (Fig. S1, Table S7). Therefore, one of the possible explanations is that

potential human gut CO utilizers with WLP are capable of utilizing more diverse

carbohydrates and/or polysaccharides than the CO utilizers of other environments,

producing more pyruvate through glycolysis. For pyruvate metabolism, 53% of the

human gut CODH/ACS-bearing genomes possessed *pflB*. PFOR (*por*) is also involved

in WLP by supplying reduced ferredoxin from pyruvate oxidation (Ragsdale 2004) and

is present in 90% of the human gut CODH/ACS-bearing genomes. These genes were

less frequently observed in CODH/ACS-bearing bacteria in other environments: *por*

and *pflB* were present in 71% and 19% of the bacteria in other environments,

respectively (Fig. S2).

Not only genes for carbohydrate/saccharide degradation (above), but also the

genes for Rnf complex (*rnfABCDEG*) were detected in a high proportion of WLP-

bearing CO utilizers in the human gut (>73%). Group B FeFe hydrogenase, which is

involved in ferredoxin-coupled H_2 production (Benoit *et al.* 2020), was relatively

enriched in human gut WLP-bearing CO utilizers (64%) (Fig. S2). Since some FeFe

hydrogenases are known as electron-bifurcating enzyme that provide Fd to Fd-

dependent Fdh of CO-utilizing acetogen (Schuchmann and Müller 2012), the co-

occurrence of FeFe hydrogenase and Fdh was checked. As a result, group A13, A4, C1,

and C3 FeFe hydrogenases were co-occurring with Fdh genes (Fig. S3). Especially, the

group A4 FeFe hydrogenase and *fdhA* were statistically co-occurring, with an adjusted

odds ratio of 2,376 and a 95% confidence interval ranging from 136 to 41,655 (Fig. S3).

Furthermore, *fdoG* was co-occurring with group C3 FeFe hydrogenases, with an odds

ratio of 59.4 and a 95% confidence interval ranging from 25.6 to 138 (Fig. S3).

However, the most prevalent type of hydrogenase, FeFe groupB hydrogenase gene,

showed no association with Fdh genes (Fig. S3).

CODH transcripts were detected from 97.3% of metatranscriptomic samples

To gain insights into whether active CO-utilizing bacteria are present in the

human gut microbiome, metatrascriptome samples from 110 healthy human individuals

were analyzed. Following quality control, 7.8 ± 1.2 million reads were obtained per

sample on average (Fig. 4a). Filtered reads were then mapped to 1,380 CODHs to

identify CODH transcripts in the human gut microbiome. It was found that CODHs

were transcribed in 107 out of 110 metatranscriptome samples, with an average of 1,127

reads mapped to the CODH sequences (Fig. 4b). The number of detected CODHs

correlated with the total number of reads ($r^2 = 75.7$), with nearly full-length CODH

mRNAs (cover length >1500 nt) detected in samples with more than 28 million filtered

reads (Fig. 4b). The host bacteria of the CODH transcripts were assigned to the 13

orders from 7 phyla (Fig. 4c). None of the reads from the CODH-bearing genomes of

the phyla Campylobacterota, Desulfobacterota, and Proteobacteria were detected in the

healthy human metatranscriptome. At the order level, there were Lachnospirales

(average 2.9×10^5 RPKM of CODH transcripts across 110 datasets), Oscillospirales (1.7

$\times 10^5$ RPKM), Peptostreptococcales (2.6×10^4 RPKM), Veillonellales (1.8×10^4 RPKM),

Synergistales (1.8×10^3 RPKM), and other 8 orders (55 to 815 RPKM). At the genera

level, CODHs from 66 genera were detected (Fig. S4). In Lachnospirales, the genera

Blautia, *Choladocola*, *Fusicatenibacter* and UMGS1375 accounted for 37.9%, 19%,

12%, and 7.9% of CODH transcripts from Lachnospirales, respectively. In

Oscillospirales, the genera *Faecousia* and CAG-170 accounted for 65% and 26% of the

transcripts, respectively. In Peptostreptococcales, 58% of CODH transcripts were from

the genus *Intestinibacter*. In Veillonellales, 99.7% of CODH transcripts were derived

from the genus *Veillonella*. Regarding the function of CODHs, 6 out of 8 types (WLP,

PEPCK, FNOR, ABC transporter, Fe-hydrogenase, MFS transporter) were identified in

the human gut metatranscriptomes (Fig. 4d). The most abundant type was WLP,

accounting for 66% relative abundance on average, while average abundances of other

types ranged from 0.02 to 5.0% (Fig. 4d).

To determine if the entire WLP is transcribed in the human gut microbiome,

transcripts of WLP-related genes were investigated. Among the most prevalent WLP-

bearing species, genomes with completeness greater than 94% were used as the

references for read mapping. As a result, transcripts of all WLP genes (*cooS*, *acsB*, *fhs*,

folD, *metF*) from six species were detected in the human gut metatranscriptome, clearly

indicating that WLP is actively transcribed in the human gut (Fig. 5). Transcripts

associated with WLP (*rnf*, *pfor*, *pfl*) were also identified in the samples (Fig. 5).

Metatranscriptome reads were mapped to *fdhF* from *B. schinkii* and *B.*

hydrogenotrophica, resulting in the detection of *B. hydrogenotrophica fdhF* in 4 out of

110 samples, although the cover length was shorter than 500 nt in all four samples.

Since PFOR can supply reduced ferredoxin from pyruvate and PFL can supply formate

from pyruvate, our interest lay in the expression balance of PFOR and PFL to predict

the metabolism of Fdh-lacking bacteria. Both transcripts for PFOR and PFL were

identified (Fig. 5 a-d). PFOR transcripts were generally detected at a higher level than

PFL, with an average 19.7-fold difference, while PFL transcripts were observed at

higher levels than PFOR in three samples (Fig. 5 a-d).

Discussion

Given the continuous production of CO through heme degradation in the human

body (Hopper et al. 2020), it was predicted that a significant number of CO-utilizing

prokaryotes exist in the human gastrointestinal tract, contributing to the consumption of

the accumulating harmful CO. Previous studies indeed demonstrated the rapid

consumption of CO by fresh human fecal samples (Levine *et al.* 1982) and by two

Blautia strains isolated from human feces in the presence of formate (Trischler *et al.*

2022). However, the mechanism through which taxonomically and phylogenetically

diverse human gut prokaryotes become potential CO utilizers in the human gut

microbiome remains unclear. In the present study, we analyzed CODH-bearing genomes

derived from potential CO utilizers in the human gut microbiome and uncovered

various Ni-CODH-bearing genomes belonging to 248 species and 82 genera across 8

phyla (Fig. 1). Furthermore, CODH transcripts derived from 66 genera, 5phyla were

identified in 110 of metatranscriptome samples obtained from healthy human with

various nationality and age (ranging from 6 months to 75 years old). This suggests that

the CO utilizing pathways are active and may constitute an important component of the

human intestinal environment. To date, only two human gut prokaryotes have been

experimentally verified as CO utilizers (Trischler *et al.* 2022) and 280 *Blautia* genomes

and 43 acetogenic species were checked to identify the presence of *cooS* (Trischler *et al.*

2022; Yao *et al.* 2023). Therefore, our findings extensively expand the catalogue of

potential human gut CO utilizers.

Our findings are not limited to phylogenetic diversity but include the functional

diversity of CO utilizers. The previously identified CO-mediated metabolic pathway in

human gut-derived prokaryotes is the WLP (Trischler et al. 2022). However, as their

CODH genomic contexts can be divided into eight distinct types presumably involved

in distinct physiological roles, the diverse taxa of the human gut microbiome are

potentially involved in CO utilization through various pathways.

We observed that WLP is most prevalent in the genomes and

metatranscriptome of human gut microbes, such as those of Oscillospirales,

Lachnospirales, and Peptostreptococcales. Almost all genes responsible for carbonyl

and methyl branches, including a gene for utilizing exogenous CO, were identified in

the genomes of the human gut microbiome. However, any types of Fdh genes were not

detected in large number of the WLP-bearing human gut microbial genomes (Fig. 3).

Previous cultivation experiments have suggested that human gut CO utilizers *Blautia*

luti and *B. wexlerae* in the order Lachnospirales lack Fdh activity but possess functional

WLP in formate-added medium (Trischler *et al.* 2022). These bacteria therefore utilize

extracellular formate. Furthermore, these bacteria possess PFL genes in their genomes

which synthesizes formate and acetyl-CoA from pyruvate (Fig. 6). It suggests that

glycolysis would become one of the primary sources of carbon and reducing power for

the Fdh-lacking WLP in *Blautia luti* and *B. wexlerae* (Fig. 6), meaning that their WLP

may be modified to a heterotrophic form that obtains carbon from organic compounds

instead of CO_2. The metabolic pathways of this "heterotrophic WLP" should be tested

experimentally. However, the coexistence of PFL and PFOR in *B. luti* and *B. wexlerae*

suggests that carbon and electron fluxes may be balanced depending on the available

carbohydrates and electron donors in the environment (Fig. 6). Additionally, group B

FeFe hydrogenase possessed by these *Blautia* strains may be utilized to dispose of the

excess amount of Fd_{red} produced via glycolysis using PFOR as evident from the

cultivate experiments of *B. coccoides* demonstrating hydrogen production in the

presence of glucose (Liu *et al*. 2015). We further predicted that this surplus Fd_{red} arises

due to the saccharide-rich environment of the human gut (Pokusaeva, Fitzgerald and

van Sinderen 2011), and part of Fd_{red} is uptaken by Fdh-lacking WLP to produce acetate

as well as the hydrogenase.

Although their CO-utilizing ability has not been confirmed, several human

gastrointestinal acetogens, including species from Lachnospirales (*B. producta* and

Marvinbryantia formatexigens) and Clostridiales (*C. bovifaecis* and *Clostridioides*

difficile), lack *fdh* but retain WLP genes (Wolin et al. 2003; Yao *et al.* 2020, 2023). This

study indicates that the Fdh-lacking WLP are not limited to *Blautia*, *Marvinbryantia*,

and *Clostridium* but more prevalently utilized in the human gut CO utilizers represented

by the 526 genomes from 32 genera. While a few routes were predicted for formate

acquisition, the "heterotrophic WLP" system may represent one favorable pathway, as it

is possessed by 53% of WLP-bearing human gut bacteria. Importantly, many of the

potential CO utilizers with such "heterotrophic WLP" also retain genes to degrade

carbohydrates and polysaccharides to greater extent than the CO utilizers of other

environments (Fig. S1, Table S7). The presence of these genes, coupled with the

availability of carbohydrates in the human intestinal tract (Pokusaeva, Fitzgerald and

van Sinderen 2011), suggests an enhanced provision of substrates for glycolysis, and

thereby pyruvate for formate synthesis. This alternative pathway for formate synthesis

may be one reason why *fdh* was positively dropped from the genomes of acetogens in

the intestinal environment (Yao *et al*., 2023). In addition, the previous findings by

Levine *et al.* (1982), which observed higher CO consumption activity of feces samples

in the presence of glucose (0.7 mL/h, g feces) than in the absence of glucose (0.2 mL/h,

g feces) (Levine *et al.* 1982), might at least partially be caused by the heterotrophic

WLP-bearing human gut CO utilizers. Regarding the other routes for formate

acquisition, 141 genomes possessed Fdh genes. These Fdh genes were found to co-

occur with putative electron-bifurcating group A13, A4, C1, and C3 hydrogenases (Fig.

S3), a condition necessary for utilizing CO to prevent toxicity to the hydrogenase

module of H_2-dependent CO_2 reductase (HDCR) (Dietrich and Müller 2023). There

were also bacteria lacking both Fdh and PFL. These bacteria may import formate from

extracellular fractions by using the formate transporters or by cross-feeding (Gomez *et*

al. 2019).

A novel CODH type, which has not been previously reported, was identified in

190 genomes of the genus *Veillonella* (Fig. 2). *Veillonella* mainly harbored clade B

CODH, a phylogenetically separate variant from the predominant WLP-associated clade

E CODH (Fig. 1). The *cooS* genome of *Veillonella* contained genes encoding PEPCK

and NarKGHJI (Fig. 2), which may be involved in CO metabolism. For instance, a

biochemical link between CO oxidation and nitrate reduction may be established as

observed in *Deferribacter autotrophicus* (Slobodkin *et al.* 2019). However, as the

reconstructed pathways described above are based only on metagenome-assembled

genomes and metatranscriptomes, further experimental verifications are necessary.

This study revealed the phylogenetic diversity of CO utilizers and their divergent

CO-utilizing pathways in the human gut microbiome. Because trace amounts of CO are

constantly produced in the human body, CO utilizers may constantly consume CO in the

human gut microbiota, avoiding the accumulation of high concentrations of toxic CO in

the gut. Therefore, shedding light on CO utilizers would help elucidate the microbial

mechanisms underpinning intestinal homeostasis in humans.

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Author contributions

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Kamikawa: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing,

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Supervision, Funding acquisition.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Figure legends

Fig. 1 The CODH-bearing prokaryotic genomes in the human gut microbiome

(a) Taxonomic classification of publicly available 30,691 human gut prokaryotic

genomes. The genomes were the representatives of more than 0.38 million genomes,

clustered with 97.5% nucleotide sequence identity (Hiseni *et al.*, 2021). The numbers in

parentheses show those of genomes. (b) The number of genomes that possess 1–3

CODHs. No genome possessed four or more CODHs in the used dataset. (c) The

number of genomes that possess a CODH belonging to any of the six clades. (d)

Taxonomic classification of the CODH-bearing genomes. (e) Phylogenetic tree of the

CODH-bearing genomes. The tip color represents the genus level classifications. The

heat maps around the phylogenetic tree exhibits order level taxonomic classifications,

CODH clades B, C, D, E, and F and mini CODH from the inner layer, respectively. The

outermost layer shows the prevalence of each genome reported in the previous study

(Hiseni *et al.* 2021). The number indicates the metagenome samples where each genome

was analyzed in 3,534 metagenome datasets.

Fig. 2 The genomic context of CODH (*cooS*) in the CODH-bearing genomes in the

human gut microbiome

The heatmap on the left shows the number of genes detected within the 15 genes

upstream and downstream of *cooS* in the genomes of each genus. Genera with more

than nine CODH-bearing genomes were selected (red font), and the gene map around

cooS of the genera is shown on the right. Each box represents protein-coding genes and

their coded strands. The gray box represents the others and the hypothetical protein.

cooS, carbon monoxide dehydrogenase catalytic subunit gene; *cooC*, carbon monoxide

dehydrogenase maturation gene; *cooF*, ferredoxin-like protein-coding gene; *acs*, acetyl-

CoA synthase gene; *fhs*, formyltetrahydrofolate synthase gene; *folD*, methylene-

tetrahydrofolate dehydrogenase/cyclohydrolase gene; *metF*, methylene tetrahydrofolate

reductase gene; *metK*, S-adenosylmethionine synthetase gene; *fnor*, flavin adenine

dinucleotide-dependent NAD(P) oxidoreductase gene; *pckA*, phosphoenolpyruvate

carboxykinase gene. *pfl*, pyruvate: formate lyase gene; *cys*, cysteine synthase gene; *nar*,

nitrate reductase gene; MFS transporter, major facilitator superfamily transporter; ABC

transporter, ATP-binding cassette transporters.

Fig. 3 The presence rates of the WLP genes and other related genes in the human

gut genomes.

Genomes possessing *cooS* and *acsB* were analyzed to reveal the presence of WLP-

related and other genes. The presence rates are displayed for each genus on a heatmap.

cooS, carbon monoxide dehydrogenase catalytic subunit gene; *cooC*, carbon monoxide

dehydrogenase maturation gene; *cooF*, ferredoxin-like protein-coding gene; *acsBCDE*,

acetyl-CoA synthase gene; *fdhA/fdhF/fdoG*, formate dehydrogenase catalytic subunit

gene; *fhs*, formyltetrahydrofolate synthase gene; *folD*, methylene-tetrahydrofolate

dehydrogenase/cyclohydrolase gene; *metF*, methylene tetrahydrofolate reductase gene;

rnf ferredoxin:NAD$^+$ oxidoreductase gene; *hycE*, energy-converting hydrogenase

catalytic subunit gene; *hdr-mvh,* methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase gene;

por/porABCD, pyruvate: ferredoxin oxidoreductase *pfl*, pyruvate: formate lyase gene.

focA/oxlT/fdhC, genes are involved in formate transport. Other genes, genes involved in

formate consumption and metabolism. The right bar represents the number of genomes

in each genus.

Fig. 4 Prevalence and diversity of CODH transcripts in the healthy human gut

metatranscriptomic datasets.

(a) Composition of sequence reads in the 110 of publicly available metatranscriptomes

in the health human stool samples. (b) Number of detected CODHs among 1,380 non-

redundant CODH sequences. (c) Relative abundances of host bacteria of the detected

CODH sequences in the metatranscriptomic datasets. (d) Relative abundances of CODH

types in the metatranscriptomic datasets. In the x-axis of the graphs, datasets with a

greater number of filtered RNA are aligned from left to right.

Fig. 5 Abundance of WLP-related transcripts in the human gut

metatranscriptomes.

The heatmaps illustrate the relative abundances of WLP transcripts derived from seven

different CODH-bearing genera that were most prevalently detected in the 110 human

gut metatranscriptomes. Genomes with more than 94% completeness were selected as

references to map the six metatranscriptomic datasets with the highest numbers of

CODH reads for the selected genomes. The seven genomes were derived from (a)

Blautia wexlerae, (b) *Choladocola* sp003481535, (c) *Fusicatenibacter saccharivorans*,

(d) UMGS1375 sp900066615, (e) *Faecousia* sp900546075, and (f) CAG-170

sp003516765.

Fig. 6 Genome-based metabolic reconstructions of the Fdh-lacking WLP in the

human gut

A schematic of Fdh (formate dehydrogenase)-lacking WLP commonly identified in the

human gut bacteria, including genera *Blautia* and *Fusicatenibacter* from Bacillota order

Lachnospirales. The figure shows an example of metabolic pathways. Pyruvate which is

mainly obtained via glycolysis is converted to acetyl-CoA and formate by *pflB*

(pyruvate: formate lysase) (red lines). Formate is then progressively converted to

methyl moiety in WLP (orange lines) using formyl-tetrahydrofolate synthase (Fhs),

methylene-tetrahydrofolate dehydrogenase/cyclohydrolase (FolD), and methylene-

tetrahydrofolate reductase (MetF). CO and CH_3 are then incorporated to acetyl-CoA

with CO dehydrogenase/acetyl-CoA synthase (CODH/ACS). The WLP may contribute

to toxic CO utilization, carbon acquisition, sink of electrons, and carbons obtained by

glycolysis in the human gut prokaryotes.

Fig. S1 Metabolic function hits detected in the three groups of genomes

The metabolic functions of the three genome groups were analyzed using METABOLIC

v4.0. The y-axis represents the genomes grouped by phylogeny (genera and orders) and

origin. The first group consists of CODH-bearing genomes detected in the HumGut

database (red). The second group comprises non-CODH-bearing genomes, which

belong to the same family as the CODH-bearing genomes in the HumGut database

(yellow). The third group comprised CO utilizers found in environments other than that

of the intestines (blue). The x-axis represents the functions identified in each genome

group. The functions were characterized by the presence of genes in METABOLIC. The

following list represents the functions and the detected genes associated with each

function, which are ordered from left to right in the columns: thermophilic-specific

(reverse gyrase), amino acid utilization (4-aminobutyrate aminotransferase and related

aminotransferases, aminotransferase class I and II, phosphoserine aminotransferase,

ornithine/acetylornithine   aminotransferase,   branched-chain   amino   acid

aminotransferase/4-amino-4-deoxychorismate   lyase,   aspartate/tyrosine/aromatic

aminotransferase,   histidinol-phosphate/aromatic   aminotransferase,   serine-pyruvate

aminotransferase/archaeal aspartate aminotransferase), ethanol fermentation (aldehyde

dehydrogenase, alcohol dehydrogenase), aromatics degradation (*catA*, *ubiX||bsdC*,

bcrABCD), complex carbon degradation (cellobiosidase, cellulase, beta-glucosidase,

arabinosidase, beta-glucuronidase, alpha-L-rhamnosidase, mannan endo-1,4-beta-

mannosidase, alpha-D-xyloside xylohydrolase, beta-xylosidase, beta-mannosidase, beta-

galactosidase, alpha-amylase, glucoamylase, pullulanase, isoamylase, chitinase,

hexosaminidase), fermentation (*porA*, *adh*, *ldh*, *acdA||ack||pta*, *acs*, *pflD*), C1

metabolism (*mxaF* or *mdh*, *mauAB*, *fdhA||fghA||frmA||mycoS_dep_FDH||fae*,

fdoG||fdwB||fdoH||fdhAB, *coxS||coxM||coxL*), methane metabolism (*pmoABC*, *mmoBD*,

mcrABC), carbon fixation (Form I, Form II, *mcr||K14469*, K14466||K18861,

K18861||4hbl, *cdhD||cdhE||cooS*, *aclAB*), nitrogen cycling (*amoABC*,

anfDKG||nifDK||vnfDKG||nifH, *nxrAB*, *napAB||narGH*, *nrfADH||nirBD*, *nirKS||octR*,

norBC, *nosDZ*, *hzoA||hzsA*), sulfur cycling (*fccB||sqr*, *dsrABD||asrABC*, *sdo||sor*,

sreABC||sor, *soxBCY*, *aprA||sat*, *phsA*), hydrogenase (FeFe-group-a13, FeFe-group-a2,

FeFe-group-a4, FeFe-group-b, FeFe-group-c1, FeFe-group-c2, FeFe-group-c3, Fe

hydrogenase, Nife-group-1, NiFe-group-2ade, NiFe-group-2bc, NiFe-group-3abd,

NiFe-group-3c, NiFe-group-4a-g, NiFe-group-4hi), oxidative phosphorylation (*nuoABC*,

ndhABC, *sdhCD*, *petAB||fbcH*, *atpAB* (V/A-type), *atpAD* (F-type)), oxygen metabolism

(*coxAB*, *ccoNOP*, *cyoABCD*, *cydAB*, *qoxAB*), urea utilization (*ureABC*), halogenated

compound utilization (E3.8.1.2||*pcpC||cprA||pceA*), perchlorate reduction (*pcrAB*),

chlorite reduction (*cld*), arsenic cycling (*arxA||aioA*, *arrA*), selenate reduction

(*ygfMK||xdhD*), nitrile hydration (*nthAB*), and metal reduction (iron reduction series

genes). Only *acdA||ack||pta* for fermentation and *lacZ* for complex carbon degradation

are highlighted.

Fig. S2 Comparisons of the gene presence rates between human gut and other

environmental WLP-containing bacteria.

The presence of WLP-related genes was compared between the genomes 667 of human

gut bacteria and 554 bacteria from other environments, all of which possess

CODH/ACS. The genes were classified into four categories: (a) WLP-related genes, (b)

genes involved in energy conservation, (c) genes involved in pyruvate metabolism, and

(d) hydrogenase genes. The presence of these genes was determined by analyzing KO

annotations using eggNOG-mapper v2.2.5. The presence of hydrogenase genes was

assessed using METABOLIC v4.0. *cooS*, carbon monoxide dehydrogenase catalytic

subunit gene; *cooC*, carbon monoxide dehydrogenase maturation gene; *cooF*,

ferredoxin-like protein-coding gene; *acsBCDE*, acetyl-CoA synthase gene;

fdhA/fdhF/fdoG, formate dehydrogenase catalytic subunit gene; *fhs*,

formyltetrahydrofolate synthase gene; *folD*, methylene-tetrahydrofolate

dehydrogenase/cyclohydrolase gene; *metF*, methylene tetrahydrofolate reductase gene;

rnf, ferredoxin:NAD$^+$ oxidoreductase gene; *hycE*, energy-converting hydrogenase

catalytic subunit gene; *hdr-mvh,* methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase gene; *porABCD*,

pyruvate ferredoxin oxidoreductase gene; *pfl*, pyruvate: formate lyase gene;

focA/*oxlT*/*fdhC*, genes involved in formate transport. Other genes, genes involved in

formate consumption and metabolism.

Fig. S3 The co-occurrence of genes for Fdh and FeFe hydrogenase in the genomes

of CODH/ACS-bearing bacteria in the human gut

(a) The count of genomes containing Fdh genes and FeFe hydrogenase genes, as well as

those lacking either gene. These counts were utilized to calculate odds ratio. (b) The

odds ratio for the co-presence of Fdh and FeFe hydrogenase genes. The red characters

indicate there were significant differences.

Fig. S4 Genera level diversity in the healthy human gut metatranscriptomic

datasets.

The genera level classification of the hosts of detected CODH transcripts are displayed.

In the x-axis of the graph, datasets with a greater number of filtered RNA are aligned

from left to right.

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Lachnospirales

(a) *Blautia wexlerae*

(b) *Choladocola* sp003481535

(c) *Fusicatenibacter saccharivorans*

Oscillospirales

(d) UMGS1375 sp900066615

(e) *Faecousia* sp900546075

(f) CAG-170 sp003516765

Function Hits

Orders
- Campylobacterales
- Clostridiales
- Coriobacteriales
- Lachnospirales
- Oscillospirales
- Peptostreptococcales
- Selenomonadales
- Veillonellales
- Eubacteriales
- Others

a Raw data (genome count)

fdhA vs group A13 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a13 +	fefe-group-a13 -
fdhA+	19	13
fdhA-	26	609

fdhF vs group A13 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a13 +	fefe-group-a13 -
fdhF+	15	9
fdhF-	30	613

fdoG vs group A13 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a13 +	fefe-group-a13 -
fdoG+	23	118
fdoG-	22	504

fdhA vs group A2 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a2 +	fefe-group-a2 -
fdhA+	1	31
fdhA-	69	566

fdhF vs group A2 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a2 +	fefe-group-a2 -
fdhF+	1	23
fdhF-	69	574

fdoG vs group A2 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a2 +	fefe-group-a2 -
fdoG+	9	132
fdoG-	61	465

fdhA vs group A4 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a4 +	fefe-group-a4 -
fdhA+	21	11
fdhA-	0	635

fdhF vs group A4 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a4 +	fefe-group-a4 -
fdhF+	19	5
fdhF-	2	641

fdoG vs group A4 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-a4 +	fefe-group-a4 -
fdoG+	21	120
fdoG-	0	526

fdhA vs group B FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-b +	fefe-group-b -
fdhA+	21	11
fdhA-	407	228

fdhF vs group B FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-b +	fefe-group-b -
fdhF+	18	6
fdhF-	410	233

fdoG vs group B FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-b +	fefe-group-b -
fdoG+	66	75
fdoG-	362	164

fdhA vs group C1 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c1 +	fefe-group-c1 -
fdhA+	3	29
fdhA-	2	633

fdhF vs group C1 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c1 +	fefe-group-c1 -
fdhF+	3	21
fdhF-	2	641

fdoG vs group C1 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c1 +	fefe-group-c1 -
fdoG+	5	136
fdoG-	0	526

fdhA vs group C2 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c2 +	fefe-group-c2 -
fdhA+	0	32
fdhA-	2	633

fdhF vs group C2 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c2 +	fefe-group-c2 -
fdhF+	0	24
fdhF-	2	641

fdoG vs group C2 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c2 +	fefe-group-c2 -
fdoG+	0	141
fdoG-	2	524

fdhA vs group C3 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c3 +	fefe-group-c3 -
fdhA+	13	19
fdhA-	53	582

fdhF vs group C3 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c3 +	fefe-group-c3 -
fdhF+	7	17
fdhF-	59	584

fdoG vs group C3 FeFe hydrogenase

	fefe-group-c3 +	fefe-group-c3 -
fdoG+	60	81
fdoG-	6	520

*fdhA = K05299

*fdhF = K22015

*fdoG = K00123

b Odds ratio   **Red character: significantly different**

fdhA vs group A13 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	33.2
Upper confidence interval	73.6
Lower confidence interval	15.0

fdhF vs group A13 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	32.8
Upper confidence interval	79.6
Lower confidence interval	13.5

fdoG vs group A13 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	4.4
Upper confidence interval	8.2
Lower confidence interval	2.4

fdhA vs group A2 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	0.4
Upper confidence interval	2.0
Lower confidence interval	0.1

fdhF vs group A2 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	0.5
Upper confidence interval	2.8
Lower confidence interval	0.1

fdoG vs group A2 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	0.5
Upper confidence interval	1.1
Lower confidence interval	0.3

fdhA vs group A4 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	2376.2
Upper confidence interval	41654.9
Lower confidence interval	135.6

fdhF vs group A4 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	909.8
Upper confidence interval	4335.7
Lower confidence interval	190.9

fdoG vs group A4 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	187.9
Upper confidence interval	3123.4
Lower confidence interval	11.3

fdhA vs group B FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	1.0
Upper confidence interval	2.2
Lower confidence interval	0.5

fdhF vs group B FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	1.6
Upper confidence interval	4.0
Lower confidence interval	0.7

fdoG vs group B FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	0.4
Upper confidence interval	0.6
Lower confidence interval	0.3

fdhA vs group C1 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	30.1
Upper confidence interval	158.8
Lower confidence interval	5.7

fdhF vs group C1 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	41.8
Upper confidence interval	223.9
Lower confidence interval	7.8

fdoG vs group C1 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	42.4
Upper confidence interval	772.0
Lower confidence interval	2.3

fdhA vs group C2 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	3.9
Upper confidence interval	82.9
Lower confidence interval	0.2

fdhF vs group C2 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	5.2
Upper confidence interval	112.0
Lower confidence interval	0.2

fdoG vs group C2 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	0.7
Upper confidence interval	15.5
Lower confidence interval	0.0

fdhA vs group C3 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	7.5
Upper confidence interval	15.9
Lower confidence interval	3.6

fdhF vs group C3 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	4.2
Upper confidence interval	10.3
Lower confidence interval	1.7

fdoG vs group C3 FeFe hydrogenase

Adjusted odds ratio	59.4
Upper confidence interval	138.0
Lower confidence interval	25.6

relative abundance

datasets

- g__
- g__Agathobacter
- g__Akkermansia
- g__Anaerobutyricum
- g__BX12
- g__Bacteroides
- g__Blautia
- g__CAG-103
- g__CAG-1427
- g__CAG-170
- g__CAG-353
- g__CAG-56
- g__CAG-83
- g__CHH4-2
- g__Caccocola
- g__Choladocola
- g__Choladousia
- g__Cloacibacillus
- g__Clostridioides
- g__Clostridium
- g__Coprococcus
- g__Copromorpha
- g__Cryptoclostridium
- g__Dorea_B
- g__Dysosmobacter
- g__ER4
- g__Enterocloster
- g__Eubacterium
- g__F0422
- g__Faecalibacterium
- g__Faecalimonas
- g__Faecivicinus
- g__Faecousia
- g__Fusicatenibacter
- g__GCA-900066495
- g__Heteroscilispira
- g__Hungatella_A
- g__Intestinibacter
- g__JAGZHZ01
- g__Lactonifactor
- g__Limivivens
- g__Marvinbryantia
- g__Mediterraneibacter
- g__Megasphaera
- g__Merdiplasma
- g__Merdisoma
- g__Mitsuokella
- g__Muricomes
- g__Oliverpabstia
- g__Pelethocola
- g__Pelethomonas
- g__Peptacetobacter
- g__Pseudolachnospira
- g__Pseudoscilispira
- g__Robinsoniella
- g__Rombousia
- g__Roseburia
- g__Ruminococcus_B
- g__Scatomonas
- g__Schaedlerella
- g__Terrisporobacter
- g__Tractidigestivibacter
- g__UBA11524
- g__UMGS1071
- g__UMGS1375
- g__Veillonella