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Web watch

FINDING THE WAY WITH LIPID MAPS

- <http://www.lipidmaps.org>

Where do you go when you need to find information on lipids? With the growth of lipidomics and the recognition that lipids have crucial roles in many biological processes (including signalling and disease), an authoritative source for information on lipids is becoming increasingly important. Enter [LIPID MAPS](http://www.lipidmaps.org), the website of the LIPID Metabolites And Pathways Strategy consortium (various other sites also exist, such as the [European Lipidomics Initiative](#) and [LipidBank](#) (a Japanese initiative)).

Based in the United States and funded by the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, the LIPID MAPS consortium aims to develop “an integrated metabolomic system capable of characterizing the global changes in lipid metabolites.” Notably, in 2005 they launched a classification, nomenclature and chemical representation scheme for all lipids, the details of which are on their website.

The comprehensive website also includes a searchable lipid structure database (with >10,000 entries), a lipid standards database (with >329 records), various protocols, useful lipid tools (such as mass spectrometry structure-prediction tools and structure sketching tools) and a list of recent publications from the consortium.

In the future, the LIPID MAPS consortium hopes that lipidomics data can be integrated with other metabolomics data to provide a complete picture of all of the metabolites in the cell (the so-called metabolome). By further integrating the metabolome with the proteome and the genome, we may be able to generate a picture of the complete composition of a cell at any given time. However, to achieve the first step — the assembly of open and exchangeable lipidomics data sets — it helps if all interested researchers use the same map.

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