

# Should We Eat Like Our Caveman Ancestors?

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The Paleolithic (Paleo) diet, also called the "Caveman" or "Stone Age" diet, centers around the idea that if we eat like our ancestors did 10,000 years ago, we'll be healthier, lose weight and curb disease. That means foods that can be hunted, fished or gathered: meat, fish, shellfish, poultry, eggs, veggies, roots, fruits and berries. No grains, no dairy, no legumes (beans, lentils and peas), no sugar and no salt. Why? According to proponents, our bodies are genetically predisposed to eat this way. They blame the agricultural revolution and the addition of grains, legumes and dairy to the human diet for the onset of chronic disease.

On one hand, this way of eating encourages the inclusion of more fruits and vegetables — which aligns with the 2015-2020 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The combination

of plant foods and a diet rich in protein may help control blood sugar and prevent Type 2 diabetes.

But a typical plan may exceed the *Dietary Guidelines* for daily fat and protein intake and falls short on carbohydrate recommendations. The exclusion of whole grains, legumes and dairy can be risky as well. These foods are nutrient-rich and contain important vitamins and minerals.

Eliminating whole grains is not necessarily the ticket to ending disease and ensuring weight loss. Whole grains contain dietary fiber, which may help reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer and diabetes, and other health complications. And, recent archeological studies have found evidence that humans living during the Paleolithic era did in fact eat grains. Diets of early humans varied drastically depending on where they lived. There is no one "Paleolithic diet."

As with any fad diet, the Paleo diet might also be hard to sustain and by eliminating entire food groups and types of foods, increases risk for disordered eating. We live in a society where it is not possible to eat exactly as our ancestors ate. For example, wild game is not readily available as most of the meat we consume has been domesticated and is produced on mass scale. Food has become an important part of our culture including celebratory meals and social gatherings.

Before beginning any diet plan, work with a registered dietitian nutritionist who will assess your food and medical history and develop a personalized nutrition plan to suit your lifestyle and preferences.