

'Paleo' diet out of step with human evolution

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

The article kicked off not just a diet, but a movement. Appearing in the New England Journal of Medicine in January 1985, "*Paleolithic Nutrition: A Consideration of Its Nature and Current Implications*" argued that the human body is "genetically programmed" to run, not on a modern diet, but on the foods consumed by our Stone Age ancestors.

The authors reasoned that human bodies have been shaped more by our prolonged time as hunter-gatherers than by the brief span since the advent of farming. Meat, probably lots of it, as well as fruits and vegetables were in. The staples of agriculture — breads, cereals, milks and cheeses — were not.

But even as the "caveman" diet rose to become the most Googled diet in 2013 and 2014, evolutionary biologists, with much less advertisement, were using advanced DNA techniques, sometimes on ancient bones, to suggest that the original Paleo premise may be off the mark: In fact, it seems, we have evolved.

Two relatively recent gene [variants](#) help humans survive with deficiencies characteristic of agricultural diets; [another genetic shift](#) appears to help fight the dental cavities that arose with farm-based staples; [another](#) changes the way humans digest fats; [dozens of others help](#) fight the diseases that came with living at higher densities.

Those new findings add to previously known adaptations to mankind's changing diet. After the domestication of milking animals, many humans evolved to digest milk. Humans also appear to have developed better ways to digest the starches characteristic of agricultural diets.

Read full, original post: [What actual 'caveman' DNA says about the Paleo movement](#)