

Human likely evolved smaller teeth due to tool use

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Wisdom teeth may have shrunk during human evolution as part of changes that started with human tool use, according to a new study.

The research behind this finding could lead to a new way of figuring out how closely related fossil species are to modern humans, scientists added.

Although modern humans are the only surviving members of the [human family tree](#), other species once lived on Earth. However, deducing the relationships between modern humans and these extinct hominins—humans and related species dating back to the split from the chimpanzee lineage—is difficult because fossils of ancient hominins are rare.

Teeth are the hominin fossils most often found because they are [the hardest parts of the human body](#). “Teeth are central to how a fossil ancestor lived, and can tell us about which species they belonged to, how they are related to other species, what they ate, and how quickly or slowly they developed during childhood,” said lead study author Alistair Evans, an evolutionary biologist at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia.

“It’s always been presumed that sometime in early *Homo*, we started using more advanced tools,” Evans told Live Science. “Tool use meant we didn’t need as big teeth and jaws as earlier hominins. This may then have increased evolutionary pressure to spend less energy developing teeth, making our teeth smaller.”

In modern humans, tooth-size reduction has reached the point where wisdom teeth are increasingly failing to develop, Evans said. “The advent of cooking made food easier to eat, meaning we didn’t need big teeth as much,” Evans said.

Read full, original post: [Human Teeth Likely Shrank Due to Tool Use](#)