

On foot: 'Evolution of walking has everything to do with what makes us human'

Going places on foot isn't a particularly glamorous way to get around. Sure, there are proven health, social and environmental benefits. But walking is... well, pedestrian, and for many running is a chore — or something you do when you're late to catch a bus.

According to human evolutionary biologist Daniel Lieberman, though, those activities are central to understanding what makes us human. When our ancestors adapted to getting around on two limbs instead of four, that adjustment made its mark on nearly every part of the human body from head to toe (and even our butts).

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"So imagine, 7 million years ago, you've got some little group of our chimpanzee-like ancestors, and all of a sudden the forest is gone. And now they're in a woodland habitat and have to travel about twice as far every day to get food. If you can save energy by standing upright, then obviously, natural selection is going to favor that. If you can spend less energy on walking around, you can spend more on having babies. It's very hard to know exactly what the first bipeds were like, but by 4 million years ago, they were pretty good bipeds," [said Lieberman.]

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