



The Wellness Family

Dr. Rittenour Keeps You Informed

The Paleo Diet: Can Following A Caveman Diet Make Us Healthier?

What did cavemen ancestors eat? Children and parents encountering the blustery “Yabba Dabba Doo-ing” cartoon caveman and 70’s icon, Fred Flintstone, on grocery store cereal aisles might think human ancestors ate processed sugar, salt, hydrogenated vegetable oil, artificial flavors and dyes all wrapped in an eye-popping cardboard box.

Launched onto store shelves in 1969, Fred Flintstone’s breakfast cereal, Fruity Pebbles, appeared just about the time the processed food industry entered its zenith and America braced itself for an unprecedented forty-year-and-counting spike in chronic and killer diseases such as cancer, diabetes and autoimmune disorders. Not to mention, learning disabilities, autism and obesity epidemics in those most entertained by the likes of fast food clowns and cartoon characters: our children.

Is the timing of the appearance of processed, artificial, genetically-engineered, grain-centered diet and America’s health crisis just a coincidence? Have our bodies evolved enough since the advent of agriculture 15,000 years ago to handle our modern diets? If our modern diets are making us sick, what did humans eat before bowls of Fruity Pebbles for breakfast and the drive-thru or take-out for lunch and dinner?

In the past few years, all of these questions led nutritionists, neurologists, and evolutionary biologists to ask: What did cavemen eat and should we eat that way today?

Eating According to the Paleo Diet

The Paleo Diet is pretty basic in its recommendations, eat natural and don’t eat processed. Packaged is typically processed. The less the packaging the more natural the foods. A great rule of thumb is to only purchase around the outside of your general market (fresh produce and fresh meat).

EAT: Grass-produced meats, fish/seafood, fresh fruits and veggies, eggs, nuts and seeds, healthful oils (olive, walnut, flaxseed, macadamia, avocado, coconut)

DON’T EAT: Cereal grains, legumes (including peanuts), dairy, refined sugar, potatoes, processed foods, salt, refined vegetable oils

Stone Age Bodies Eating Space Age Diets?

Gastroenterologist, Walter L. Voegtlin, first introduced the Paleo Diet concept in the mid-1970s, in the book, *Stone Age Diet*. He used his caveman diet for decades to treat his patients suffering from colitis, Crohn’s Disease, Irritated Bowel Syndrome, and indigestion. He believed that modern humans are genetically adapted to a diet that our Paleolithic ancestors followed because human genetics have barely changed since the dawn of agriculture.

Even though detractors like to say there isn’t enough science behind the caveman diet to support its claims for healing, extensive research into the diet and its healing powers was presented in the book, *The Paleo Diet*, by Loren Cordain, PhD. A completely updated version of the book was published in 2010.



The Paleo Diet is pretty basic in its recommendations, eat natural and don’t eat processed.

As Cordain explains in his cornerstone book *The Paleo Diet*, “Your car is designed to run on gasoline. When you put diesel fuel into its tank, the results are disastrous for the engine. The same principle is true of us: We are designed to run best on the wild plant and animal foods that all human beings gathered and hunted just 333 generations ago. The staples of today’s diet - cereals, dairy products, refined sugars, fatty meats, and salted, processed foods - are like diesel fuel to our bodies’ metabolic machinery. These foods clog our engines, make us fat, and cause disease and ill health.”

Operating from the belief that stone-age bodies cannot thrive on space-age foods, *The Paleo Diet’s* intention is to mimic the varieties of foods humans consumed prior to the Agricultural Revolution. These caveman foods, including fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and seafood, are high in beneficial nutrients

-- including soluble fiber, antioxidant vitamins, phytochemicals, omega-3 and monounsaturated fats, and low-glycemic carbohydrates -- that promote good health. They are low in the foods and nutrients -- including refined sugars and grains, trans fats, salt, high-glycemic carbohydrates, and processed foods -- that frequently may cause weight gain, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and numerous other health problems.

The Paleo Diet has also been called the Hunter-Gatherer Diet and the Neanderthal Diet. In a nutshell, the real Paleo Diet recommends no dairy and grain products, which were not consumed by cavemen but eaten as a large percentage of the modern diet and even recommended as the main component of our diets by the US government!

What about the Paleo Diet for Children?

Many children do eat the Fred Flintstone diet, but should they eat the real caveman diet? Dr. Cordain surprises parents with this practical advice:

“Over the years, many friends and family have asked us how to ensure that their children eat Paleo foods at all times, whether they are at school, visiting friends, or attending social functions. It may surprise you that we have never been quite this vigilant and strict with our children’s food choices. We feel that it is our responsibility to continually educate, provide, and model for our children the importance of eating a Paleo Diet. Equally important, we have shared the scientific principles that guide the Paleo Diet concepts and the positive impact this lifestyle will have on their health throughout their lives. We want our kids to make educated decisions and understand the implications for their choices.”

The world expert on the Paleo Diet says, “Because they have been given the information they need, each has made the personal decision to choose mainly healthy, Paleo foods as their dietary lifestyle of choice... With 2 children in college and one in high school, we find that guiding their food choices throughout their growing up years, and allowing the occasional treat has led them to make very healthy choices on their own. This is a gift you can give your children to take with them as they head down the road for a lifetime of health and longevity.”

Why the Controversy?

While eating whole foods and lean meats might seem like common sense, the Paleo Diet has been panned by many mainstream media outlets and some institutions as “just a fad.” It is interesting to note that the Paleo Diet doesn’t involve any patented or trademarked packaged products, so anyone can follow the eating chart above and even find free recipes online. So what’s the problem? Maybe because the premise of the Paleo Diet is to point out that humans should not eat processed, chemical foods, grains or dairy, billion dollar food industry defenders are piling on to dismiss the relatively new idea as unsupported or a passing fad.

How will you know if the Paleo Diet works for you? What if you just HAVE to have that grain or dairy product? Mark Sisson says, until you have removed all of the offending, processed foods, grains and dairy from your diet for a minimum of thirty days, enough time to allow your gut to heal, and then slowly and one by one reintroduce the food you really can’t live without, you won’t know. Maybe by then, your stone-age diet will propel you into a golden age of health?



*Dear Patient,
Dr. Rittenour is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family’s overall health and wellness.*

This newsletter is provided to you by:

Parker River Chiropractic & Wellness
Dr. Stephanie Rittenour
95 Parker Street
Newburyport, MA 01950
978.462.0263