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Early humans may have hibernated in winter – 27th December, 2020

Level 0

Animals hibernate for the winter. They escape the cold in a hole. Perhaps early humans did this too. Winters were much colder hundreds of thousands of years ago. Scientists looked at bones from humans from 430,000 years ago. Cuts and other damage on the bones were like those on the bones of animals who hibernate.

Early humans slowed down their bodies in winter so they could survive longer without food. They could not do this like a bear. Bears can sleep for months. Hibernating gave early humans health problems. Many of these were because of not enough vitamin D from sunlight. This made their bones weaker.

Level 1

Animals keep food and hibernate for the winter. They escape the cold in a hole. Scientists think early humans also did this. They looked at the bones from our ancestors who lived 430,000 years ago. The scientists know a lot about ancient bones. Cuts and other damage on the bones were like those on the bones of animals who hibernate. Early humans hibernated to escape the cold. Winters were much colder hundreds of thousands of years ago.

There is evidence to show that early humans slowed down their metabolism. They could survive longer in winter without food. Humans could not do this like a bear. Bears can wake up after months of sleeping and their body will be the same. The bones showed that hibernating gave early humans health problems. Many of these were because of not getting enough vitamin D from sunlight. This made their bones weaker.

Level 2

Animals stock up on food and hibernate for the winter. They escape the snow and cold in a cave or hole. Scientists think early humans may also have hibernated. The scientists looked at the bones from our ancestors who lived 430,000 years ago. The bones were found in Spain. The scientists are experts in studying ancient bones. They say that cuts and other signs of damage on the bones are similar to those on bones of animals who hibernate. They also say that early humans may have hibernated to escape the extreme cold. Winters were much colder hundreds of thousands of years ago.

A scientist said there is evidence to show early humans slowed down their metabolism. This was so they could survive longer in winter without food. However, humans could not do this like a bear. Bears can wake up after months of sleeping and their body will be the same as before they went into hibernation. The bones showed hibernation caused early humans health problems. Many of these were because of a lack of vitamin D, which we get from sunlight. This makes our bones weaker. The scientist said: "We have to emphasise that hibernations are not always healthy."

Level 3

Many animals hibernate for the winter. They stock up on food and hide away in a hole or cave to escape the snow and cold. Scientists now believe early human beings may have hibernated too. The scientists looked at the fossils of bones from our early ancestors who lived around 430,000 years ago. The bones were found in a site in the north of Spain. The scientists are experts in studying fossils and ancient bones. They say that the cuts and other signs of damage on the bones they examined are similar to those on bones of animals who hibernate, like bears. They also say that early humans may have hibernated to escape the extreme cold. Winters were much colder hundreds of thousands of years ago.

The scientists looked at the bones of several dozen humans. Scientist Antonis Bartsiokas said there is evidence that early humans slowed down their metabolism so they could survive longer in winter without food. However, humans could not slow their metabolism like a bear. Bears can wake up after months of hibernation and their body will be the same as when they went into hibernation. The bones of the early humans showed people suffered health problems because of hibernation. Many of the problems were caused by a lack of vitamin D, which we get from sunlight. This can make our bones weaker. The researchers said: "We have to emphasise that hibernations are not always healthy."