

Early humans may have hibernated in winter

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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 Bartsiakos 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."

Sources:
[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com) / [sciencealert.com](https://www.sciencealert.com) / [sputniknews.com](https://www.sputniknews.com)

Writing

Hibernating in winter would be great for humans. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

hibernate / cave / snow / fossils / bones / experts / damage / similar / extreme / cold / scientists / humans / metabolism / survive / bear / hibernation / vitamin D / sunlight

True / False

- a) The article says animals stock up on food and hide in a cave or hole. T / F
- b) Scientists studied the bones that were over 500,000 years old. T / F
- c) The scientists are experts in hibernating for the winter. T / F
- d) Winters were milder hundreds of thousands of years ago. T / F
- e) The scientists looked at the bones of over 100 early humans. T / F
- f) Bears could slow their metabolism for longer than early humans. T / F
- g) A lack of sunlight caused early humans health problems. T / F
- h) A scientist said hibernating was always healthy. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. hibernate | a. absence |
| 2. escape | b. harm |
| 3. ancestors | c. proof |
| 4. damage | d. get away from |
| 5. extreme | e. stress |
| 6. evidence | f. more frail |
| 7. suffered | g. sleep |
| 8. lack | h. very great |
| 9. weaker | i. predecessors |
| 10. emphasise | j. experienced |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you know about the body's metabolism?
- c) What do you think of snow?
- d) Do you ever hibernate in your room?
- e) What do you know about vitamin D?
- f) What is the longest you can sleep for?
- g) How important is sunlight?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the scientists?

Phrase Match

- Many animals hibernate
- They stock up on food and
- escape the
- the fossils of bones from
- hibernated to escape the extreme
- scientists looked at the bones of several
- humans could not slow
- people suffered
- caused by a lack
- This can make our bones
- weaker
- snow and cold
- dozen humans
- cold
- hide away
- their metabolism
- of vitamin D
- for the winter
- health problems
- our early ancestors

Discussion – Student B

- Why do animals hibernate?
- Would you like to hibernate?
- What do you do to escape the cold?
- What do you know about early humans?
- What do you know about fossils?
- What was life like hundreds of thousands of years ago?
- Have you ever had a broken bone?
- What do you know about bears hibernating?

Spelling

- eespac the snow and cold
- the slfsois of bones
- our early snrtcsaoe
- The scientists are setepxr
- fossils and tnianec bones
- escape the rtxeeem cold
- the bones of evaersl dozen humans
- there is edinceev
- slowed down their mbtaiesml
- people frfudees health problems
- a lack of aimvtni D
- We have to ssmeihape that

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. b	5. h
6. c	7. j	8. a	9. f	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Hibernation

You think hibernation is the best animal attribute. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their attributes. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): a bat's radar, an ant's teamwork or an eagle's eye.

Role B – A Bat's Radar

You think a bat's radar is the best animal attribute. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their attributes. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): hibernation, an ant's teamwork or an eagle's eye.

Role C – An Ant's Teamwork

You think an ant's teamwork is the best animal attribute. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their attributes. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): a bat's radar, hibernation or an eagle's eye.

Role D – An Eagle's Eye

You think an eagle's eye is the best animal attribute. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their attributes. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): a bat's radar, an ant's teamwork or hibernation.

Speaking – Animals

Rank these with your partner. Put the best lifestyle aspects of animals at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- An eagle's eye
- A cheetah's speed
- A bat's radar
- An ant's teamwork
- Hibernation
- A chameleon's camouflage
- Dog-like hearing
- A dolphin's ultrasound

Answers – True False

a T	b F	c F	d F	e F	f T	g T	h F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.