

Healthy Diet

Was the Neolithic diet healthier than mine today?

Learning Overview

WHAT: Identify that animals, including humans, need the right types and amount of nutrition, and that they cannot make their own food; they get nutrition from what they eat (Year 3 Animals Including Humans)/Understand and apply the principles of a healthy and varied diet (Key Stage 2 Design & Technology).

HOW: By learning about the five food groups and classifying different food using the 'healthy plate' guide.

OUTCOME: Pupils will make direct comparisons between the Neolithic diet and food choices available today. They will categorise foods into different groups and draw conclusions about nutrition and diet.

Resources



Activity Sheet 3



Shopping bag containing a selection of popular food and drink

Vocabulary

Diet, nutrition, carbohydrates, dairy, protein.

Setting the Scene: What is a healthy diet?

1. Begin by asking pupils if they know what is meant by the term 'a healthy diet'. Gather suggestions from the class about what types of food are considered to be healthy choices and how much of each type of food we should be eating in order to get the balance right.
2. Discuss how humans cannot make their own food and how we get nutrition from what we eat so that our bodies can use food for energy and growth.
3. Show pupils a shopping bag containing a selection of popular food and drink items. Ask if they can sort these into healthy and unhealthy choices.
4. Compare different groups' ideas before explaining that all food can be included in a healthy diet as long as we eat the right amounts of each type.

What do scientists tell us?

5. Explain to pupils that scientists have classified food into five different food groups. This helps us to make healthy choices and ensure that our body receives the nutrients and vitamins it needs to function.

6. Ask if anyone can name any of the five food groups. Discuss how food and drink can be categorised into: 1) fruit and vegetables, 2) bread, rice, cereals, potatoes and pasta – often known as carbohydrates, 3) milk and dairy, 4) meat, fish, eggs, beans and nuts – often known as protein, 5) fats, oils and sugars.
7. Explain that scientists have developed guides such as 'food pyramids' and 'healthy plates' that show the five food groups in the proportion that they should be eaten throughout the day. Share Activity Sheet 3 and discuss the amounts recommended for each type of food by looking at the segment sizes within the circular 'plates'.

Exploring the Evidence: How can I compare the Neolithic diet to mine today?

8. By revisiting what they have learned about the Neolithic diet, pupils should plan a day's food diary for a person involved in building Stonehenge, living at Durrington Walls. For example, a breakfast of berries could be followed by pork around noon and a later meal of beef stew with celery could finish the day. They may wish to include honey, but this was a relatively rare part of a Neolithic diet, so would have been a special treat only! Also, cereals may have been made into bread or porridge, although there is no evidence of this at Durrington Walls.
9. Using their fictitious Neolithic meal plan, pupils should attempt to record the different food choices in the appropriate sections of 'plate 1' on Activity Sheet 3. For example, berries would be written in the 'fruit and vegetables' section of the circle, pork in 'meat, fish, eggs, beans and nuts' and honey classified as 'fats, oils and sugars' and so on...
10. In order to make a direct comparison, pupils should now refer to their own food diary completed for Activity 2 and have a go at classifying the different food choices in the appropriate sections of 'plate 2' on Activity Sheet 3.

And finally...

11. Pupils should discuss the similarities and differences between 'plate 1' and 'plate 2' on Activity Sheet 3 once completed. Are there any sections of the circles that remain empty? This could tell us that a certain type of food is missing, such as a lack of carbohydrates in a Neolithic diet. Are there any sections of the circles that are full of food items? This could tell us that a certain type of food is being eaten too much, possibly food high in fats, oils and sugars in a modern-day diet.
12. Encourage pupils to make suggested improvements to each type of diet and, in particular, reflect on how they could make better choices for their own daily food and drink intake. Ask if they think prehistoric people had three meals a day like we do?



Fantastic Fact

The Neolithic diet consisted of large amounts of protein from lean meat, fresh vegetables and sometimes fish. Fish was very, very rare in the Neolithic period, but very popular in the Mesolithic period. This kind of diet is still considered to be one of the healthiest ways to eat, even today!

Foods available during the Neolithic time period

Beef	Wild strawberries	Crab apples
Pork	Bilberries	Sloes
Lamb	Crowberries	Rowan berries
Milk	Elderberries	Venison
Cheese	Hawthorn	Wild garlic
Butter	A solitary grape	Nettles
Lard	Barley	Burdock
Leafy greens (wild generally)	Oats	Hazelnuts
Mushrooms	Wheat	Flax seeds
Blackberries	Small amounts of honey	Wild bird eggs (such as duck)



Stonehenge Feast | English Heritage - Credit: Andre Pattenden