Could the evolutionary mismatch concept help to generate interest in health promotion interventions?

Lis Grey, Fiona Gillison and Dylan Thompson
Department for Health, University of Bath

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The changing environment

Change in the environment helps to shape the human body. As it is useful to look at how our environment has changed over the years and see what has had the biggest impact on human lifestyles.

The very first humans separated from the ape family about 6 million years ago and many different species of humans have existed since then. Modern humans (Homo sapiens) are the only surviving species and evolved from their ancestors about 200,000 years ago. So most of humans’ 6 million year history our ancestors survived by hunting, scavenging and gathering foods and lived in small groups that moved about the land.

About 12,000 years ago, some humans started to grow plants from seeds they collected – they could then eat the plants that they grew. This was the start of agriculture. Also known as the Agricultural Revolution. People came to depend more on the plants they grew and less on hunting and gathering for food. They also started to tame wild animals and use them to help them for food. Raising gradually spread around the world and became the norm of the way of life for most of the population – it greatly affects the foods we eat and our daily activities.

The next big change to human environment was the Industrial Revolution, which happened much more recently – about 250 years ago. The Industrial Revolution was revolutionary change in the work of humans. Machines were invented to take the work of several humans, much faster and in larger quantities. As more machines were invented they quickly became an extremely part of human lives – affecting everything from the way we travelled to the foods we eat and how we communicate with each other.

The Industrial Revolution led to great many changes to our environment and these have occurred in a relatively short time (when thinking about other changes in human history). Since computers were invented, about 40 years ago, the pace of change has become even faster, with many tasks now being completely controlled by computers without the need for humans to lift a finger. Indeed, some people are calling ours age the Digital Revolution.
Key findings

**Novelty:** It makes that resonate in a deeper way ... that hasn't been presented to me in quite the same visual way before, that makes me think about it in a different way. *(LS – f, 43)*

**Depth of understanding:** Going right back to look at our ancestral diet and the way our body is evolved, gives you a real understanding of ‘why?’ And I think people need to know why, for it to have an impact... otherwise it’s a set of rules *(LL – f, 39)*

**(Negative) elaboration:** We are eating more sugar nowadays but then again ... you hear on the news that we’re living longer than we used to... So what’s wrong? Is more sugar keeping us alive, because we’re preserved? *(MB – m, 47)*
Thank you for listening