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Scientists say early risers have Neanderthal genes – 21st December 2023

Level 0

Early risers wake up because of their body clock. Researchers said early risers share DNA with Neanderthals – our ancestors from 40,000 years ago. They woke up earlier to gather food as the sun rose. A researcher said a "faster" body clock makes people "more likely to rise early".

The researchers looked at genetic information to find out why some people are early birds and others are night owls. The Neanderthal DNA may weaken as time passes. Modern life means many of us prefer to sleep in. We are becoming night owls. Nevertheless, it is true that the early bird catches the worm.

Level 1

Early risers naturally wake up early because of their body clock. Most people are still in deep sleep. Researchers said early risers share DNA with Neanderthals – our ancestors from 40,000 years ago. They lived in northern Europe and Asia. They woke up earlier to gather food as the sun rose. A researcher said our body clock can change with the light of different seasons. He said a "faster" body clock makes people "more likely to rise early".

The researchers looked at genetic information to find out why some people are early birds and others are night owls. The early birds shared DNA with Neanderthals. However, the effect of the Neanderthal DNA may be weakening as time passes. Our modern lifestyles mean many of us prefer to sleep in and not get up. Nevertheless, it may still be true that the early bird catches the worm.

Level 2

Early risers naturally wake up early in the morning. Their body clock makes them do this while most of us are still in deep sleep. Researchers said early risers could have some DNA from Neanderthals – our ancestors from over 40,000 years ago. Neanderthals lived in northern parts of Europe and Asia. They woke up earlier to gather food as the sun rose. A researcher said it was better to have a body clock that could change to match the changing light of different seasons. He said a "faster" body clock makes people "more likely to rise early".

Scientists have wondered why some people are early birds and others are night owls. They looked at a database full of genetic information. People who said they were early risers shared DNA with Neanderthals. The research found many examples of Neanderthal DNA in the early risers. The effect of the Neanderthal DNA may be weakening as time passes. Our modern lifestyles mean many of us prefer to sleep in and not leave the comfort of our bed. Nevertheless, it may still be true that the early bird catches the worm.

Level 3

Early risers are people who naturally wake up early in the morning. Their body clock causes them to get up while most of us are still in deep sleep. Researchers at the University of California said early risers could have some shared DNA from Neanderthals – our ancestors who lived over 40,000 years ago. Neanderthals lived in northern parts of Europe and Asia. They woke up earlier to hunt for or gather food as the sun rose. Researcher Dr Tony Capra said: "At higher latitudes, it is beneficial to have a body clock that is better able to anticipate and change to match the changing seasonal light levels." He added: "Having a 'faster' body clock...makes individuals more likely to rise early."

Scientists have spent a long time looking at why some people are early birds, while others are night owls. They looked at a medical database with genetic information for hundreds of thousands of people. They compared the DNA of people who said they were early risers with the Neanderthal DNA. Their research found more examples of Neanderthal DNA existed in the early risers. However, it is likely that the Neanderthal gene is not so strong in many people. The effect of the Neanderthal DNA may be weakening as the centuries pass. Our modern lifestyles mean many of us prefer sleeping in to leaving the comfort of our bed. Nevertheless, it may still be true that the early bird catches the worm.