



HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Ancient Bones Reveal Ancient Diet, Lifestyle

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Scientists learned recently that fish was the main source of protein for people in southern Scandinavia many thousands of years ago. They also ate other animals that live in the water. The findings come from Lund University in Sweden. Scientists there tested ancient human bones from more than 80 individuals.

One of the researchers was Adam Boethius. He says by studying the chemistry of the bones, they learned the diet of the people they belonged to.

"Basically you are what you eat. And so when you study this -- **stable isotopes** -- you get an **indicator** of what the humans have been eating."

The study examined the importance of a mix of protein sources in the human diet from around 10,500 to 7,500 years ago. They found that in Scandinavia most of what people ate came from the sea.

Boethius said back then, fish made up 50 to 70 percent of the diet. He said other sea animals like seals and dolphins brought that percentage to almost 100 percent.

This research changed the understanding of how ancient people of the area lived. Earlier studies suggested these people hunted big animals and moved around a lot to follow them. But the chemical examinations did not show proteins linked to deer and elk and other land animals of the time.

Boethuis said scientists now believe these people stayed in place for most of their lives and ate local food. The discovery, he argued, provides evidence that "**settlements** appeared in Scandinavia much earlier than researchers" once believed.

I'm Anna Matteo.

Julie Taboh reported on the Lund portion of this story for VOANews in Washington, D.C. Anna Matteo adapted it adding additional information from Lund University's website. Katy Weaver was the editor.

Words in This Story

stable isotope – *n.* Stable isotopes are non-radioactive forms of atoms.

indication – *n.* something (such as a sign or signal) that points out or shows something

settlement – *n.* a place or region newly settled : a small village