

Evolutionary Medicine

Evolution is the single most important idea in modern biology, shedding light on virtually every biological question, from the shape of orchid blossoms to the distribution of species across the planet. Until recently, however, the theory has had little impact on medical research or practice. Evolutionary Medicine shows how this is beginning to change. Collecting work from leaders in the field, this volume describes an array of new and innovative approaches to human health that are based on an appreciation of our long evolutionary history. For example, it shows how evolution helps to explain the complex relationship between our immune systems and the virulence and transmission of human viruses. It also shows how comparisons between how we live today and how our hunter-gatherer ancestors lived thousands of years ago illuminate a variety of contemporary ills, including obesity, lower-back pain, and insomnia. Evolutionary Medicine covers issues at every stage of life, from infancy (colic, jaundice, SIDS, parent-infant sleep struggles, ear infections, breast-feeding, asthma) to adulthood (sexually transmitted diseases, depression, overeating, addictions, child abuse, cardiovascular disease, breast and ovarian cancer) to old age (osteoporosis, geriatric sleep problems). Written for a wide range of students and researchers in medicine, anthropology, and psychology, it is an invaluable guide to this rapidly developing field.

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