

MSU Science Zone

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What would aliens look like?

We haven't discovered any aliens yet so we don't know if they exist. But, many scientists think it is likely we will someday discover aliens and that they won't look like the little green men in cartoons. They might be small microbes. Microbes are tiny living things that can include plants and animals. Things like bacteria and fungi are microbes.

Some kinds of microbes, called extremophiles, live in places that are freezing, super hot, deep underground, or at the bottom of the ocean. These environments that are "extreme" on Earth are similar to what is "normal" on other planets or moons. Therefore, scientists think if we find life in the universe it might resemble the life on Earth living in the extreme environments (extremophiles). Scientists at Montana State University (MSU) are researching how extremophiles from Yellowstone might give us clues about what life on other planets might look like.

If we do find life close by in our solar system, scientists think the best places to look are Mars, Europa (a moon of Jupiter), Enceladus and Titan (moons of Saturn).

Try this!

Microbes are almost everywhere and play an important part in our lives. Try eating a microbial meal made up of foods that are the products of microbial activity. Eat foods like bread (especially sourdough), yogurt, cheese, pickles, chocolate, tea, root beer, and olives. Do some research and find out what microbes help produce each food.

