

Weed: What Men Need to Know

TONS OF USEFUL STUFF

Men's Health

CONQUER

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TOTAL FITNESS

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**ALL★AMERICAN
SUMMER
ISSUE**

AUGUST 2014
\$4.99 US DISPLAY UNTIL AUG. 5



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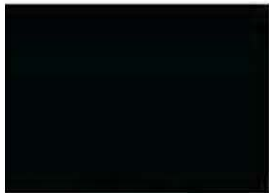
THAR HE BLOWS!

Between retching and the runs, GI trouble can spoil summer. Here's how to not spill your guts.

EVERY JULY, YOU SEE COLORFUL EXPLOSIONS. THEY'RE USUALLY A FEW hundred feet up in the air and elicit oohs and aahs. But if you're unlucky, they can also erupt in the toilet and prompt prayers for a quick death.

Summer is the season for barbecues, pool parties, and camping trips—all settings that can light the fuse of gastrointestinal fireworks. In part, that's because common triggers for vomit and diarrhea—such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites—never take a vacation. But it's also because summer is the season when you're most likely to be visiting Margaritaville (hang-overs) and taking a boat or a plane to get there (motion sickness).

Don't waste these months holed up inside the bathroom. We've assembled a survival guide that will help you squeeze the most out of summer—and ensure that a bottle rocket is the only projectile you launch.



TOP TEN NUDE BEACHES ON THE PLANET

9/ Viti, Askja, Iceland

Geothermal energy makes the milky blue waters of this volcanic crater lake naturally warm. Bonus: You won't have to worry about shrinkage!

GUT BUSTER

Bacteria

You didn't put *E. coli* on the Evite to your barbecue, but this bug—and its pals *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*—may crash anyway. They'll incubate on undercooked meats, creamy salads, and egg-based sides sitting in the sun. You may not realize they made an appearance until hours later, when you see their calling cards in the toilet bowl.

► **SHIELD YOUR STOMACH** Bacteria bask in the sun, but they can't take real heat. Grill ground pork or beef to an internal temperature of 160°F, poultry to 165°F, and steak to 145°F. Like your burgers rare? Store-bought ground beef can be contaminated by cows' intestines (*E. coli*'s prime hang-out), so grind beef yourself or ask a butcher to do it, says Cleveland Clinic gastroenterologist Maged Rizk, M.D. Then carry burgers to the grill with the Porter (\$35, quirky.com), a caddy with containers to prevent cross-contamination. Now to make sure your deviled eggs don't cause you to upchuck like a man possessed, go to the other temperature extreme. Keep these and other foods in a cooler with large blocks of ice. (Freeze water bottles or milk cartons the night before.) Discard anything that sits out for two hours or more—or an hour if the mercury cracks 90°F.

► **CALM THE CHAOS** Most guys with the runs run to remedies like Imodium. Skip these if you see blood or slimy, gloppy mucus—signs of bacteria at work. Stifling the shits can cause toxin buildup, damaging your intestines. Instead, replace the fluids you're ejecting from both ends by drinking eight to 10 glasses of water a day. Also, eat potassium-rich foods, such as bananas and potatoes. (Peel the spuds to limit fiber.) Still perched on the porcelain after three days? Call your doctor. Make it sooner if you have severe abdominal pain, see bloody diarrhea or vomit, or have a fever above 101°F. These symptoms may indicate that bugs have spread outside your GI tract, requiring antibiotics, says Daniel J. Stein, M.D., a gastroenterologist at Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin.

GUT BUSTER

Viruses

Although they travel incognito as "stomach flu" and stow away on cruise ships, norovirus and its cousins have nothing to do with influenza. In fact, as they release toxins that send your guts into panic mode, they make the seasonal flu seem mild. Your intestines push water, sodium, and potassium into your gut, leaving you with watery diarrhea and a serious electrolyte shortage, says James Lee, M.D., a gastroenterologist at St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, California.

► **SHIELD YOUR STOMACH** Just one brief encounter with an infected person or a contaminated surface is enough for norovirus to turn your world—and your stomach—upside down. "Often you can't do anything to prevent yourself from getting it," says David A. Greenwald, M.D., a gastroenterologist at Montefiore Medical Center in New York. Still, you can lower your odds by washing your hands regularly before and after handling food or performing any, um, toilet-related tasks, such as wiping yourself or someone else. (Yay, diaper duty!) Scrub with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, especially if someone you know has been sick with a stomach bug. Even if the victim claims to feel fine, don't buy it—some people can remain contagious for weeks after their symptoms abate.

► **CALM THE CHAOS** It can feel as if your butt will never leave the bowl: Your body may need two days to clear these viruses. As you wait, it's safe to slow the flow with Imodium. And drink 8 ounces of clear liquid after every toilet trip, says Dr. Lee. Stick with water or a hydration drink for diarrhea, like Pedialyte. (It works for adults too.) You can also try a low-sugar sports drink like Gatorade G2. Avoid the regular kind—sugar will pull more fluid from intestinal cells, worsening diarrhea. Warning: If you lose more than 5 percent of your body weight within a day, see your doctor—you may need IV rehydration to prevent serious complications such as brain swelling, seizures, and even kidney failure, says Dr. Rizk.

GUT BUSTER

Parasites

A bear can ruin your camping trip without lifting a claw: If Yogi (or any animal) takes a dump near a stream that you drink from, you could be exposed to the parasites *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*. Other avenues for ingesting this duo include pool water an infected person swam in, or unsanitary tap water in a developing country. If these bugs latch onto your gut, you're in for weeks of diarrhea and stomach cramps.

► **SHIELD YOUR STOMACH** Tote H₂O. For day hikes, take about 16 ounces for every hour you plan to walk; for longer trips, you'll need about 2 gallons a day, says Andrew Skurka, author of *The Ultimate Hiker's Gear Guide*. For refills, pack a SteriPEN (\$70, steripen.com). When you place it in water, its ultraviolet light kills 99.9 percent of waterborne illness-causing bugs. You can bring the pen abroad too, though it won't protect you from raw fruits and vegetables that were washed in contaminated water. If your destination is a parasite-prone area listed at cdc.gov/travel, avoid produce, ice cubes, and any water that you didn't disinfect or that wasn't served sealed. Oh, and when you swim, shut your mouth.

BACTERIA BASK IN THE SUN, BUT THEY CAN'T TAKE REAL HEAT.

► **CALM THE CHAOS** See a doctor if you suspect traveler's diarrhea. Most cases are bacterial and clear up in a few days, but if it lasts for weeks, odds are you've ingested *Giardia* or *Cryptosporidium* and will need antiparasitic medications. As you wait for the drugs to kick in, eat small, frequent meals—they're easier on your stomach, Dr. Lee says. Worst case: You experience respiratory symptoms, such as shortness of breath. If that happens, call your doc stat, says Dr. Rizk—parasitic larvae might be hatching in your lungs!

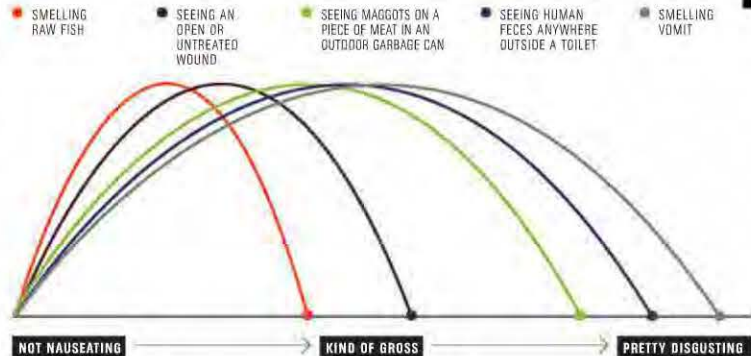


David Stuart/Masterfile (left)

WHY YOU GAG

The sight, scent, or taste of anything that can infect you activates a brain region linked to nausea and vomiting, says Alan Hirsch, M.D., director of the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation. Thanks, evolved protective mechanisms! We asked 500-plus readers what pegs their puke meter.

—GILLIAN FRANCELLA





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GUT BUSTER

Alcohol

Unless you're a model of self-restraint, you know what happens when too much hooch goes down the hatch: You puke. But there's also a hidden toll, including damage to your stomach lining, which can cause a painful condition called gastritis, says Dr. Greenwald. Add to that the GI abuse wrought by the byproducts created when you metabolize booze, such as congeners and acetaldehyde, and tying one on seems more like pouring down poison.

► **SHIELD YOUR STOMACH** Stick to two drinks a day or less, and pace yourself at one per hour—your body can metabolize alcohol at about that rate, neutralizing some of its effects, says Alyson Mitchell, Ph.D., a food chemist at UC Davis. And anytime you're waffling about what to order, stick with clear liquors, which have fewer congeners.

► **CALM THE CHAOS** If you overimbibe, don't attempt to head off a headache with aspirin, which can further irritate your already inflamed stomach lining, Dr. Rizk cautions. Acetaminophen is worse: To process this chemical, your liver makes an enzyme called p450—the same one it uses to break down alcohol. Since your liver can produce only a limited amount of p450 at once, you risk damaging the organ with unprocessed alcohol and acetaminophen. Ibuprofen is the lesser evil, but frequent use may also cause ulceration in your GI tract. So go drug-free: Place an ice pack or a warm, moist cloth—whichever feels better—on your head and neck. To relieve lingering nausea, stay hydrated and eat eggs—they contain cysteine, a compound that helps clear acetaldehyde from your system, Mitchell says. Or make an omelet with a cysteine-rich cheese, like Swiss.

GUT BUSTER

Motion

When you're on the ocean or in the air, your stomach may decide it's time to show everyone what you ate for lunch. Blame an evolutionary glitch in your operating system, says Dr. Lee. He speculates that when something jostles the motion sensors in your ear, your brain interprets it as a sign you've ingested a hallucinogenic toxin and induces vomiting to eliminate it.

► **SHIELD YOUR STOMACH** En route, sit where there's minimal motion—the front seat of a car, over the wing of a plane, or the front or middle of a ship near water level. Then stare at the horizon. This helps your body distinguish between the motion of the vehicle and that of your body, say University of Minnesota researchers. At the same time, set your Spotify to a Coldplay sta-

tion. Researchers in Germany found that listening to relaxing, pleasant music helps stave off motion sickness better than jamming to livelier tunes or sitting silently.

► **CALM THE CHAOS** The problem is in your head, not your stomach, so remedies like Pepto Bismol won't help much, Dr. Lee says. Instead, pop ginger root (try Nature's Way, \$4 for 100 550-milligram capsules, amazon.com). A dose of 2 to 4 grams has been shown to ease motion sickness, Dr. Lee says, perhaps because a compound called 6-gingerol slows nerve transmissions that tell your guts to rumble. Then strap on a ReliefBand (\$120, amazon.com). A study in *Military Medicine* found that this device relieves motion sickness by delivering electrical signals to an acupuncture point linked to nausea.

GUT BUSTER

Anxiety

It's wedding season, and that could spell "best man speech." If you feel sick before your big moment, blame the gut-brain connection, says Roshini Raj, M.D., an NYU gastroenterologist and author of *What the Yuck?! The Freaky & Fabulous Truth About Your Body*. Anxiety sends stress hormones surging through your bloodstream and eventually to your stomach, where receptors pick them up and start your intestines on a roller-coaster ride. This leads to nausea, cramping, and that gotta-go feeling, Dr. Greenwald says.

► **SHIELD YOUR STOMACH** Tell your stress that it's game on! In a Hunter College study, anxious presenters who played a game called Personal Zen (free for iPhone, personalzen.com) before speaking showed less stress reactivity, the juiced-up sensation that can rumble guts. The game trains you to focus on the positive while ignoring threats (in this case, angry cartoon faces). The app will be available to Android users later this year. Until then, approximate the effect by breathing deeply and focusing on three positive things that happened to you that day, says study author Tracy Dennis, Ph.D.

► **CALM THE CHAOS** Even if you think you won't be coherent without coffee, skip it. Caffeine will kick up your nerves, and the acids may amplify gut troubles. A better hot option: peppermint tea. A study review in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* suggests that this minty aroma calms queasiness, perhaps by relaxing stomach muscles. And U.K. research shows that the scent of peppermint can also increase alertness. Try Twinings Pure Peppermint Tea (\$3 for 20 bags, twiningsusashop.com). ■