

# Men's Fitness

## Fit For Survival

by Josh Bernstein

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**Josh Bernstein** knows a thing or two about surviving in the wilderness: He's the president and CEO of the Boulder Outdoor Survival School. Exclusively for *MF*, he breaks down the basics of surviving in the wild.

### ON GETTING STUNG

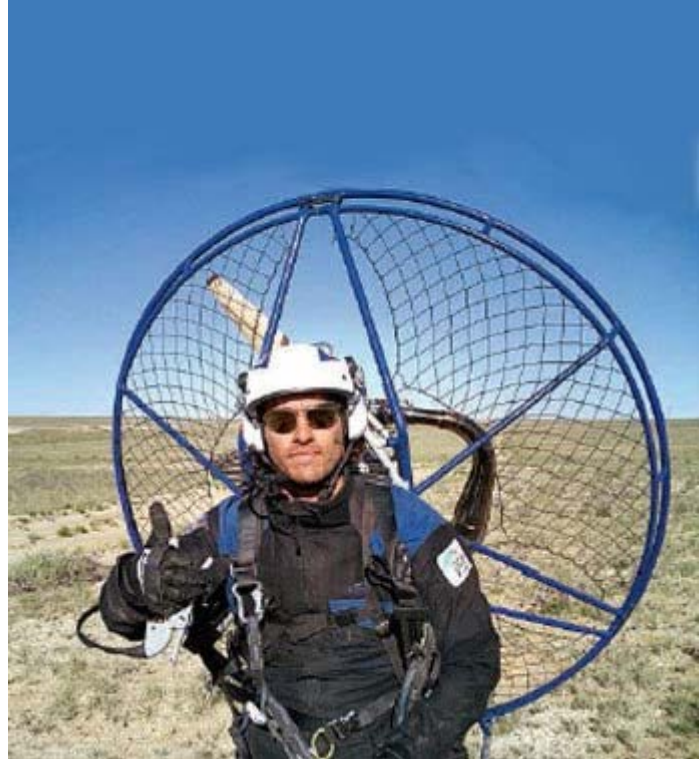
Stings from insects like wasps, bees, ants, and scorpions usually mean a few hours of pain and discomfort, and perhaps some localized swelling. But most stings are not typically life threatening. Should you experience any full-body swelling, hives, rashes, or itching (especially in the lymph nodes or groin), you need help fast. First, take an antihistamine like Benadryl. This is critical. Quickly get to a hospital for emergency care. If you can bring whatever stung you along, it may be used to diagnose what kind of toxin you're reacting to. I was once stung by so many fire ants I nearly died. Those two tiny antihistamine pills got me to the hospital and saved my life.

### ON BEING BITTEN

If a snake attacks, the best thing you can do is stay calm, keep the wounded area below your heart to slow the venom's movement, and get to a doctor. Sucking out the poison, zapping it with electricity, and heating it up are not recommended. Most people don't die from snakebites, but you will need treatment. And usually, you don't want to inject yourself with antivenom- it often complicates your reaction.

### ON BATTLING THIRST

While food isn't essential for life- you can go days or even weeks without it-water is critical. Your body is roughly 60% water; you need fluids to keep your body, your blood, and your brain functioning properly. A well-hydrated body produces clear and colorless urine throughout the day. If you're dehydrated (peeing orange), managing your water and/or finding water are critical. Drink what you have, but not all at once. Ration about one cup every 20 minutes, and keep an eye out for bright-green trees, bees, birds, and other signs of water nearby. Stay cool, breathe through your nose instead of your mouth, and avoid wasting energy. Do not eat-all digestion



uses up precious water.

### **ON CONQUERING THE COLD**

Hypothermia due to exposure is one of the biggest killers in the wilderness. People often forget to pack for cold weather, and when a day trip turns to an overnigher and the temperature plummets, it can be fatal. The trick to staying warm is creating a dead-air space around your body for insulation. So get out of the wind and try to retain heat. It might sound odd, but stuff your sweater and pants with dry leaves- they'll create the dead-air space you need (like down filling). Build a mound of leaves and crawl in. Find a cave or a burrow. If it's snowing, you can build a quinzhee or snow cave. I recommend everybody build at least one shelter in your backyard when you're not at risk- that way, you'll know what to do should you ever really need it.

### **ON BEATING THE HEAT**

You're probably familiar with heat exhaustion-that tired, sweaty, overheated fatigue you get when it's unbearably hot out and you've been working way too hard. The best way to beat this feeling is to drink lots of fluids (with electrolytes and salts) and stay out of the sun. Heat exhaustion is debilitating, but it isn't life threatening. Heat stroke, however, is. If you have heat stroke, you typically aren't sweating anymore- you've passed into a dangerous state in which you might be delirious and unresponsive. You need to be cooled quickly and rehydrated. I once had a client on a trip get heat stroke and we soaked his core with river water to cool him down.

### **ON NOT BUSTING A GUT**

I've had plenty of stomach "issues" over the years-giardiasis, cryptosporidium, amoebic dysentery, and whipworm are just a few of the more recent cases. If you're only a few days into a trip and your stomach is acting up, it's probably just your body getting used to a new environment and diet. If, however, you've been traveling for several weeks and drinking or eating hygienically challenged water and food, you may have some unwanted critters in your gut. If this is the case, a stool culture can confirm your suspicions. Most of the time, a single dose of an antibiotic can get rid of the problem.