

5 Steps To Stay Healthy On The Trail When Bugging Out

When SHTF, a lot of people will go into the woods because that's their only viable option for bugging out to safety.

For some of them, this will be a tough choice, but it will still be better than fighting with their fellow humans for depleting resources. Your ability to survive in the wilderness will depend on your own physical and mental strength, but also on your skill to stay healthy on the trail.

In a highly stressful situation, you must be able to take care of yourself both mentally and physically; otherwise, your risk of dying out in the woods. In most “fortunate” cases, you will end up injured or sick, and overall, a burden for everyone in your party.

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Even more, if you have people depending on you, their only hope of survival degrades alongside your health. To keep your loved ones safe, you must make sure you stay healthy on the trail, and you should take care of yourself properly.

You don't need to become an expert survivalist to travel through the woods and stay healthy while doing so. All is required is for you to take certain measures while at the same time, become an example for those following you.

How to stay healthy on the trail

Taking care of your feet

Your body is your main vehicle of transportation when SHTF and you need to take care of its moving parts. The feet play an important role, and they need proper maintenance to endure the journey.

In an urban environment, you may neglect your feet and use alternative means of transportation like a bike or perhaps a motorcycle, but in the wilderness, that's not a given. You will rely on your feet to get you to safety, but also help you procure resources such as food and water.

One of the first things you need to do is carefully pick a pair of boots. Start by checking out the reputable brands that specialize in designing and manufacturing heavy-duty boots. Even though the pair of boots you pick has the word heavy in the name, that doesn't mean the boots themselves should be heavy.



You have to pick a pair of boots that can withstand all sorts of weather while at the same time, provide all the comfort available. Even more, make sure you break in your new boots to avoid blistering on the trail. I recommend reading about treating blisters and also what products you can use to

prevent blisters from appearing during long walks on uneven terrain.

Once you cover the boots aspect, you move to the socks, and as a general rule, you should have at least one pair of socks for each climate. For example, I go with wicking socks as an under layer since the synthetic material pulls sweat away from my feet. During the winter season, I always pick wool socks to keep my feet dry and warm.

It is important to keep your feet dry as much as possible to avoid fungal infections. Fungal infections develop when the microorganism inhabiting your feet drain moisture from the skin. To have fungal-free feet, you will need to change your socks often. If you didn't pack enough pairs of socks, you would have to dry the pairs you have without doing too many stops. I often tie them on my backpack during warm weather, and the sun does a pretty good job at both drying and disinfecting my socks.

Another aspect that is a must to be mentioned is the trimming of nails. You should do so properly (trim them straight across) because your nails may end up injuring your feet. Those with rounded nails will have to deal with ingrown nails during long journeys on foot. Even more, your nails can fall off if too much pressure is being put on them (usually when going downhill).

I recommend getting some foot powder since it will help with sweat absorption and provide you with the relief your feet need. A trick I had also learned years ago is to use baking soda mixed with water to wash my feet. I do this when setting camp and right after going to sleep, and I found out it rejuvenates my feet for the next day.

Maintain proper oral hygiene

During hiking trips, most people seem to neglect the oral

hygiene situation. They don't bother with it because "we won't be here for long." However, during a bugging out situation that requires a long journey through the wilderness, proper teeth care is mandatory if you want to avoid developing oral health issues that can lead to excruciating pain.



The last thing you need is a toothache when medical aid is not available. Not only will it affect your mental state, but it will also decrease your physical abilities. Bring a toothbrush when bugging out and educate yourself on how to keep good oral hygiene on the trail.

If you forgot your toothbrush, you could make one from various plants. For example, here is how I do it using alfalfa plants:

- Take alfalfa roots that are thick around in diameter and strip the outer skin
- Dry the roots without exposing them directly to the sun
- After the roots have dried, you have to cut them in 3-5 inch pieces.
- Hit each end with a hammer or a rock to break up the fibers and form a brush (beat it enough to make bristles)
- Fold the roots in half and bundle them

I recommend soaking the improvised toothbrush in warm water before using it and avoid pressing too hard on your gums since you may cause bleeding.

So now, you have a toothbrush, but how about toothpaste?

If you forgot that as well, you can still improvise some “camp toothpaste.” Remember I mentioned earlier about baking soda? If you brought some with you, making some powder toothpaste is quite easy.

Feel free to use the following recipe whenever you lack toothpaste.

Ingredients: 2 salt teaspoons, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of baking soda, 2 tablespoons of dried lemon rind, and one tablespoon of dried orange rind.

Start by grinding the rinds to a powder using any available tools (I use a mortar and pestle) and add the salt and baking soda. Mix until everything becomes a fine powder. You can use your finger to rub the paste on your teeth, or you can use the improvised toothbrush. This powder toothpaste lasts a long time if you store it in a dry place.

Clean your body

Getting dirty is part of the whole experience when hiking or camping, and it's somehow true if we're talking about leisure activities. However, a long bug-out journey requires good body hygiene, and you need to clean your hand and body regularly. This is not a debatable subject when we discuss survival scenarios.



Being exposed to the elements will create various skin conditions. Not to mention that many insect bites and vegetal matter rubbing onto your skin can cause a lot of harm. You need to clean your skin on a daily basis and wash all your wounds to prevent infection. Even a small, neglected wound can get infected.

If you keep your body clean, not only will you avoid health issues, but you will also improve your morale quite a bit. An old camping buddy used to say that freshening up on the outside can make miracles on the inside, and after years of camping, I can vouch for that.

As you can imagine, being able to clean your body requires having a water source readily available. Some may use alternatives such as wet wipes or hand sanitizers, but those are just temporary solutions. You will eventually need a source of water when your hygiene supplies run low.

Take advantage of natural remedies

Having a proper medical kit in your bug out bag is mandatory, but you also have to know that Mother Nature sometimes has your back in case something bad happens. Your supplies may run out, or you may have to use them to save others.

Gaining knowledge of natural remedies and knowing which plants, trees, flowers, and weeds are beneficial to your health is a must if you plan to spend a lot of time in the outdoors.

If you have a headache or fever, willow leaves can help you ease up the symptoms. How about burns and wounds? Plantain and aloe can help even better than modern medicine.

The thing I want to emphasize here is that every geographical region of this beautiful country of ours can provide you with both edible and medicinal plants. You should know what vegetation grows in your living area and what benefits each

plant can offer.

I also recommend keeping a plant identification field guide in your bug out bag. If you're a beginner when it comes to foraging, such a guide will provide you with all the information you need.

Prepare before bugging out

A bug out plan that includes adventuring into the wilderness requires some out of the box thinking. Staying healthy on the trail in an unknown environment requires proper planning and a well-thought backup plan.

You need to keep your mind, body, and soul healthy if you want to survive any obstacle. Before you ever take out your first pair of "survival boots" for a quick test, you should make sure all of the essentials are planned.

Your bug out bag should be packed with all the survival essential, but you should also make arrangements to carry these items on you in case needed. Assume that you will be separated from your survival bag and imagine various scenarios. Try to figure out an answer for each of the envisioned scenarios and don't make things "too easy" for yourself.

Think about what you need to do if you or someone from your party gets badly injured. Every task you plan on doing with modern tools should have a backup plan in which you make do without those tools.

If you want to stay healthy on the trail, you need a plan, but most importantly, you need to act on it. When was the last time you checked your supplies, even your medical ones? Are you sure your bug out bag doesn't need to be updated? Are the food items still edible? How about the expiration date on your medicine?

Concluding

If you plan for bugging out into the woods and if you don't act on it, you may find yourself in a situation where survival becomes impossible. If you have people depending on you, you also need to make preparations for them and take into account their strengths and weaknesses when doing so.

Surviving in the wild often requires you to be fully functional, and you will reach your destination only if you take into account both the expected and the unexpected. Remember that Mother Nature doesn't offer any second chances.

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