

7 Shocking Ways You Didn't Know People Could Die

By **CAROLYN STEBER** | 6 days ago |



When it comes to tamping down your usual worries and anxieties about life, you might not want to zero in on all the [weird ways to die](#). As long as you take care of yourself and get regular checkups, you're doin' what you gotta do. And yet, it doesn't hurt to pack more health knowledge into your brain, either for yourself or for others in your life.

Because, when it comes to [keeping an eye on your health](#), it's always a good idea to be your own advocate. And, of course, to talk to your doctor whenever you notice a change in your body. "As long as you stay attentive to what is normal for your body, it'll be easier to gauge when something gets out of balance and could lead to problems," author and [lifestyle expert Jaya Jaya Myra](#) tells Bustle.

So don't worry too much, or assume little health changes spell out the end. Instead, be proactive about your health in whatever way you can. "That means seeing an internist once a year and getting annual blood work that reveals baseline data about your health," health and wellness expert Dr. Arthur Turovets, chiropractor and founder of NJ Diet, tells Bustle. While it's incredibly rare to die from the issues mentioned below, if your health is relatively good, it's always good to be aware and to catch things early. "Early diagnosis is the best advantage a doctor can have over any disease," Turovets says. "A delayed diagnosis can be the cause for escalating a health issue." So if something seems amiss, get yourself checked out. With a healthy curiosity, and keeping in mind the chances of these things happening are *super small*, here are some of the most shocking ways someone can die, according to experts.

1 Not Treating A Tooth Infection



jayzynism/fotolia

You might think what happens in your mouth stays in your mouth. But, as it turns out, oral health can have a pretty big impact on the rest of your body — all thanks to infections and how they spread.

"Just tooth decay doesn't usually [cause a problem], since the bacteria are very slow-growing and are typically confined to the outer part of the tooth. But if a tooth abscess develops, then a lot of bacteria accumulate and then bacteremia can occur, and ultimately endocarditis," Dr. Mark Pool, a cardiothoracic surgeon at [Texas Health Dallas](#), tells Bustle.

Pool says [bacteremia](#) is when bacteria accumulate in the blood, and [endocarditis](#) is when an infection forms inside the heart, as a result. So, in rare cases, letting infections abound in the body can be a ticket to poor health.

"It doesn't occur with every infection in the body. But bacteria can get out of an infected area and ... stick to structures inside the heart," Pool says. So while you don't need to panic over every little cavity, you should treat any infections in your mouth, ASAP.

Keep in mind, however, that a tooth infection leading to death is rare. According to a study published in *Medicine*, infective endocarditis (IE), which is [another name for bacterial endocarditis](#), "is an uncommon but potentially devastating disease, with an estimated annual [incidence ranging from 2 to 7.9 per 100,000 individuals per year](#), and a short-term mortality of 10 percent to 30 percent."

2 Over-Exercising To The Extreme

In almost every way, going to the gym and exercising improves your health, and strengthens your heart. But in some cases, going too hard while working out can damage your health — and can sometimes lead to death. "Although regular exercise helps strengthen the heart and lowers the risk of cardiovascular problems long-term, strenuous exertion does increase immediate risk for heart attack and sudden cardiac arrest," *Health* reported. "According to the American Heart Association, more than 350,000 people suffer out-of-hospital cardiac arrests each year throughout the United States. And many of these events happen while people are working out."

Health noted that this is unlikely to happen to a younger, healthy person. But it's still important to pay attention to signs from your body that you're pushing yourself too far. "Typical symptoms include feeling under the weather and very fatigued," Dr. David Greuner, Surgical Director of NYC Surgical Associates, tells Bustle. "Muscle soreness that lasts longer than expected, or muscles that were not worked out that are also sore, are other signs that your body likely needs a break."

It's when someone doesn't listen to their body, and pushes themselves past that point in an extreme way, that a dangerous situation like a heart attack can occur. But there's also a condition known as rhabdomyolysis, "with an incidence of approximately 29.9 per 100,000 patient years but can have very serious consequences of muscle ischemia, cardiac arrhythmia, and death," according to study published in *Sports Health*.

"Rhabdomyolysis is a potentially serious condition in which damaged skeletal muscle breaks down rapidly, leading to symptoms such as severe muscle pains, weakness, vomiting and confusion, and could eventually lead to kidney failure — and in some cases, death," Greuner says.

This won't happen, however, on a regular trip to the gym — even if you're sweating or "pushing" yourself past your comfort zone. "Those who are ... new to exercising, as well as pros who push themselves too hard, are the most likely to get hit by this condition," Greuner says.

Sitting For Too Long

Hannah Burton/Bustle

Most of us sit at a desk all day, and that's OK — that alone isn't going to kill you. Sitting is only dangerous when it's part of an overly-sedentary lifestyle, or when you're sitting for literally hours and hours on end without getting up, day after day.

"Sitting disease, a term coined by the scientific community, is commonly used when referring to metabolic syndrome and the ill-effects of an overly sedentary lifestyle," Carrie Schmitz, a wellness research manager at Ergotron, tells Bustle. "Research has found strong links between sitting disease and mortality as well as a variety of serious health problems that can increase the risk of death, such as blood clots, heart disease and cancer."

Here are some stats: "In terms of prevalence, the number of sedentary Americans has risen 18 percent since 2007, and the World Health Organization reports that physical inactivity is estimated to be responsible for approximately 1.9 million deaths each year," Schmitz says. "It's difficult to calculate how common it is for sitting too long to lead to death — first, because there doesn't seem to be an estimate of how many people sit at desks throughout the world, but more importantly, because

risk factors are not simply accumulative (over time), but multiplicative. For example, the progression of cardiovascular disease will depend on how many of the various risk factors are present."

If you're worried about a desk job affecting your health, talk to your doctor about your risk factors. And while you're at it, make it a point to move around as much as possible during the day. "Replacing one hour of sitting with low-level activity — like walking — can reduce mortality by 30 percent," Schmitz says. "If you're watching television, stand up during the commercial breaks. Take phone calls standing up (at work or at home!). When driving somewhere, park your car further away from the building entrance to get more walking in. Proactively take a stretching break a few times a day to help increase blood flow." And that can decrease your chances of getting sick, or shortening your lifespan, due to sitting too much.

4 Never Sleeping

Andrew Zaeh for Bustle

One in three people have some form of mild insomnia. And while it may not be ideal, it's certainly not deadly. As John Cline, PhD said on Psychology Today, "... there are no recorded human fatalities directly attributable to either insomnia or to lack of sleep. There is, however, a rare disease with associated insomnia which does result in death."

And that's what's known as fatal familial insomnia (FFI), a condition that can happen, and yet is *so* incredibly rare. According to the US Department of Health & Human Services, "As of 2016, there have only been 24 reported cases of sporadic FFI."

Sporadic FFI occurs when some of a person's normal PrP (prion protein) spontaneously changes into the abnormal shape which causes FFI, and then somehow changes the shape of PrP in other neurons in a chain reaction."

According to the MSD Manual, fatal familial insomnia can lead to [difficulty falling asleep and maintaining sleep](#), as well as cognitive decline, ataxia (a loss of control over body movements), and psychiatric symptoms. As noted by the US Department of Health & Human Services, "There is currently no effective treatment for FFI, but research for a treatment and cure is ongoing. Death usually occurs within 12-18 months of the first symptoms."

"Remember, though, that [fatal familial insomnia is extremely rare](#), and unless a family member died of insomnia you are not likely to have any predisposition to this disorder," noted Dr. Michael Thorpy and Dr. Shelby Freedman Harris of the Sleep-Wake Disorders Center at Montefiore Medical Center, in *The New York Times*.

And while there is only supportive treatment for fatal insomnia, the regular old insomnia most people experience can be treated. As Caleb Backe, a health and wellness expert for [Maple Holistics](#) tells Bustle, "You are in charge of your own body and your own health. Modern western medicine, and ancient medical traditions, can do a lot for your health and vitality, but ultimately it is up to you." So if you can't sleep, [don't be afraid to seek treatment](#).



Snoring

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Sleep apnea is another sleep condition which can often be identified by the sufferer's super loud snoring, as well as daytime drowsiness. "Loud snoring ... can indicate [obstructive sleep apnea](#), which can be potentially lethal for brain cells," Dr. Mashfika N. Alam, a family physician on [icliniq](#), tells Bustle. Not only does it cause you to stop breathing momentarily while you sleep, but it can also lead to other health problems, and those health complications that sometimes result from sleep apnea are what can potentially cause death.

As noted on Mayo Clinic, "Sudden drops in blood oxygen levels that occur during sleep apnea [increase blood pressure and strain the cardiovascular system](#). If you have obstructive sleep apnea, your risk of high blood pressure (hypertension) is greater than if you don't." Obstructive sleep apnea may also increase the risk of recurrent heart attack, and increase the risk of stroke. "If there's underlying heart disease, these multiple episodes of low blood oxygen (hypoxia or hypoxemia) can lead to [sudden death from an irregular heartbeat](#)."

It is estimated that [22 million Americans suffer from sleep apnea](#), with 80 percent of the cases of moderate and severe obstructive sleep apnea undiagnosed, according to SleepApnea.org. Some statistics also estimate that about 38,000 people die annually from heart disease with complications resulting from sleep apnea. While most of us snore lightly in our sleep, those with sleep apnea will snore loudly, and have other symptoms such as daytime irritability, morning headaches, [and attention problems](#).

If you believe you believe you have sleep apnea, speak with a doctor to help find forms of treatment that will prevent it from becoming serious.



Having A Water Allergy

"Yes, that is a real thing," says Myra. "Although its *extremely* rare, people can have a severe allergy to water touching their skin." The condition, known as aquagenic urticaria, causes the skin to break out in painful hives and lesions when it comes in contact with water — tears, sweat, rain, etc.

Some people can have such a severe allergy that it can lead to difficulty breathing. So for sufferers (and you'll know from a young age whether you have it or not, as age of onset is typically around puberty) life can be pretty scary. "Image not being able to bathe, to go outside when it rains, or even to cry without having a horrible reaction," Myra says.

There are currently no known treatments for it, apart from antihistamines to keep swelling down. But researchers are learning more about the causes, with many speculating that it might have something to do with an immune response to an allergen in the water, rather than the water itself. Again, this is extremely rare, with fewer than 100 reported cases in medical literature, according to Live Science. But it's worth knowing about, all the same.

Ignoring An Eye Infection

Andrew Zaeh for Bustle

When it comes to the eyes, it's important not to let any infections go unchecked. "A mild-moderate eyelid infection, called cellulitis, if untreated can spread quickly and start to reach the area behind the eyes," [ophthalmologist Dr. Ming Wang](#) tells Bustle. "The eye, being itself nervous tissue, is a direct extension and connection to the brain. For this reason, when the infection spreads behind the eye, it can quickly follow this connection and reach the brain, which can lead to a much more severe infection and even death."

When that happens, it's a condition called orbital cellulitis, which Wang says is an uncommon condition. "The incidence has been cited to be around 4 per 100,000 (.004 percent), with some variance depending on the period studied. However, because of the severe risk of complications in including blindness and death, patients with an eyelid infection should still seek treatment to ensure that they do not develop the condition. Successful treatment for more mild infections ensures that more do not fall into this stage of the condition."

Usually, cellulitis starts as a bacterial infection. "Orbital cellulitis is a generally an extension of a bacterial infection a source near the eye (eyelid, tear drainage system, or the sinuses) into the soft tissue behind the eye," he adds. "Fungal sources are also possible, though less common. Children are at much more risk than adults with the average age between seven to 12. Risk factors include trauma, insect bites, ocular surgery, upper respiratory infection, and acute or chronic sinusitis."

Even though it's so rare, do be on the lookout for certain symptoms. "Initial symptoms would include redness of the eyelids, but then could include fever, severe blurred vision, and headache," Wang says. "For this reason, eyelid infections, if spreading should be evaluated immediately. If any symptoms such as fever, blurred vision, and headache occur this can be an emergency and care should be obtained from an emergency department. It is an uncommon condition, but can affect people at younger ages."

While not every fatal health issue is treatable or preventable, it is a good idea to always be aware of your body, and treat any health issues or surprising symptoms as they arise. It's extremely rare for these issues to result in death among healthy individuals, and yet it never hurts to be informed.