Improbable Medical:  
ESOPHAGUS, WITH PEPPERS AND WATER

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Esophageal Rupture After Ghost Pepper Ingestion

“Esophageal Rupture After Ghost Pepper Ingestion,” Ann Arens, Leila Ben-Youssef, Sandra Hayashi, and Craig Smollin, The Journal of Emergency Medicine, vol. 51, no. 6, 2016, pp. e141-e143. (Thanks to Matthew Hall for bringing this to our attention.) The authors at the University of California, San Francisco, and Alameda County Medical Center/Highland Hospital, report:

The ghost pepper, or “bhut jolokia,” is one of the hottest chili peppers in the world. Ghost peppers have a measured “heat” of > 1,000,000 Scoville heat units (SHU), more than twice the strength of a habanero pepper. To our knowledge, no significant adverse effects of ghost pepper ingestion have been reported.

A 47-year-old man presented to the Emergency Department with severe abdominal and chest pain subsequent to violent retching and vomiting after eating ghost peppers as part of a contest.... The patient was intubated and taken immediately to the operating room, where he was noted to have a 2.5-cm tear in the distal esophagus, with a mediastinal fluid collection including food debris, as well as a left-sided pneumothorax. The patient was extubated on hospital day 14, and was discharged home with a gastric tube in place on hospital day 23.

Thermal Effects of Whole Head Submersion in Cold Water on Nonshivering Humans


In 17°C water, the head does not contribute relatively more than the rest of the body to surface heat loss; however, a cold-induced reduction of perfused body mass may allow this small increase in heat loss to cause a relatively larger cooling of the body core.