

Can You Eat Leeches in a Survival Situation? The Facts Explained

By Joe Ready

While you may not be running to your nearest waterway in search of a leech, it is useful to learn about leeches and their nutritional value. We will break down how you could eat leeches if need be and the overall nutrition the leech offers. If you would like to learn more, keep reading!

Eating Leeches for Survival

The idea of eating leeches may make you a bit squeamish! However, it is not unheard of for leeches to be used in some countries as a form of nutrition. While they are not the prettiest thing to look at, they can be a great way to stay alive in a crisis situation.

Leeches are a member of the worm family and are easily found in nature. They are not recommended for routine consumption, but rather when in a true survival situation. Leeches are not ideal for eating, but they can be a source of much needed calories.

When eating a leech, you have two main options, to eat it raw and alive or cooked. Cooking these these little guys is a much better option. **However, if you are in a pinch, you can eat them raw by keeping these factors in mind:**

- If you are eating a live leech, you must keep it in your mouth and chew it thoroughly.
- **By chewing the leech, it should be killed and this will make the process a bit easier.**
- You want the leech to be dead before swallowing. A live leech going down your throat can quickly become a major issue.
- Chewing quickly will kill the leech and can make the entire process go a little bit faster.

How to Cook Leeches

If you are in a situation where you may need to eat a leech, you may not have the means necessary to cook it. **However, it can be much easier to digest if**

you cook the leech before eating. Clearly a plate of leeches will never taste great, but cooked leeches are much better than just eating them raw. There are several ways that you can cook a leech if need be. Some ways that you can do so are:

- **Crushed and Cooked Over Fire** – If you do not have options on how to cook your leech, doing so over a fire is one of the easiest ways. You can crush the leech and then basically fry it. This will make sure it's dead and make it easier to prepare.
- **Flavor the Leech** – While you may not have an adequate amount of spices should you be eating leeches for survival, adding flavor can help make things more digestible. You can forage for wild greens, spices, or other ways to add to the leech for an easier taste.
- **Try a Recipe** – This may sound silly considering we are talking about a leech. However, if you simply want to try the leech out of curiosity, you can find recipes online. These will go over ways you can use the leech in a dish and make them palatable.

Are Leeches Nutritious?

Of course, this leads into the question of if leeches are even nutritious? **While the leech itself is not something you will want to eat for an extended period of time, it can keep you alive if there are no other food options.** The main nutritional value that comes from leeches will be protein. While this may be a gross fact, if the leech has recently eaten there will be blood present. This blood can serve as a source of iron and other minerals. **Some things to keep in mind about the nutrition from eating leeches are:**

- Leeches have very little carbohydrates. This means you will not get much energy from the leech.
- The protein from a leech will keep you alive for short periods of time. This is not something to eat long term.
- In most situations, there are better sources of nutrition out there. You will want to forage for other sources of nutrition as well if you are in a survival situation.

Overall, eating a leech will not provide all of the nutrition needed for long term survival. However, it will be a good source of some nutrition for limited periods of time.

Risks that Come with Eating Leeches

The biggest risk that will come with eating a leech is if you do so when they are raw and alive. Leeches will try to grab onto the mouth and if not killed even the throat is at risk. This can clearly become an issue as they can become a choking hazard or even block the airway.

Some signs and symptoms of having a leech in your throat that you need to be aware of are:

- Difficulty Swallowing
- A Sore Throat
- Bloody Vomiting / Coughing
- Melena – A black sticky feces. This is a sign of blood consumption.
- Shortness of Breath
- Feeling of Suffocation
- Harsh or Raspy Breathing

If you are in the wilderness or a survival situation, always chew the leech fully or cook it before eating. Clearly, it can be challenging to see a doctor if you are in this situation and in the wilderness. However, being proactive is the best way to avoid this.

Conclusion

As you can tell, leeches are not the first or best option when it comes to eating. However, they can provide the nutrition to survive if there are no other options available. It is important to keep in mind that leeches do come with some risks and you must be careful when digesting them.

Retrieved from <https://readylifestyle.com/can-you-eat-leeches-for-survival/>