What Goes down, sometimes comes back up.

December 23, 2015 By Rick Nash

I woke up to notice and unusual cough and a foul taste in my mouth. I proceeded to walk myself to the bathroom where upon I discovered a color I didn't think could come from a person. The alarming color I saw was a dark purple scattered about chunks of all different types of foods that I'd eaten throughout the day. I assumed that it was possible that it may have been something that I ate, so I proceeded to go through all the different foods that I'd eaten that day in my head. Whatever the potential culprit was, I slowly drank some water and sat upright as I awaited the next round. I was aware that this was not finished.

The color, the smell, the taste, everything about it seemed unusual. And at 4 AM this is something I needed to keep an eye on. As the morning crept forward I would again find myself face to face with a porcelain halo. I proceeded to dump even more of a purple - now what appeared to be dark red into the bowl. At this point I was certain somewhere inside me... I was bleeding. I have tasted blood that'd been drying in my stomach before, I have tasted fresh blood from the back of my throat; but this taste this chemical popcorn taste was unlike anything ever that I had willingly consumed. From there I cleaned myself up yet again and sat on my bed waiting for one last thing to make sure. *The curious thing about an internal bleed in your GI is that there are two areas you can watch: your mouth and your butt, so now I was merely waiting for the moment to pass so to speak.* Upon inspection I found absolutely nothing unusual, and it was at this point I proceeded to make some phone calls and be on my way to ER.

While waiting for my dad I sat upon the steps to my home. The cool breeze coming up from the canyon, my arm gently resting on the handrail so that if something may happen perhaps I may lean on it for support. My stomach burning from the inside out, and a plastic bag in my hand. Prepared for the worst, a towel over my shoulder waited to clean up any unwanted messes. After a moment I was on my way. There was nothing unusual about the ride except for me vomiting along the way. Thankfully, I had my plastic bag! When we arrived to the ER I handed it off to my father, he proceeded to attempt to give it to the ER nurse which was entertaining to say the least. Because she would have none of it. The next part is a touch hazy as within perhaps an hour of my stay in the ER I was under mild sedation. A 20 gauge needle in my hand was a sobering reminder of the potential impending problems. (A needle gauge between 18-22, is used in case of blood transfusion)

While in the ER I proceeded to vomit a few more times before they rolled me upstairs to the ICU.

Most nurses are kind of confused when they first see me on the ICU floor because typically speaking patients in the ICU well ummm… they're a lil less spry. There are number of reasons why the ICU is typically where I end up going, one of them has to do with conscious sedation and the other with the fact that my status may change within a moment. When the new doctor came in prior to the procedure to introduce himself we went over the basics of the procedure's complications, and a little bit of my own patient history. He was very surprised at both the number of treatments I've failed, my outstanding health otherwise and my age. Saying " I'm not going to lie you are very unlucky."

The procedure kept getting pushed back, so hours went by where I refused pain meds because of the impending fentanyl required to scope me. So when he came in and said "Long time no see." Well I couldn't help but respond "Yup." I'm not certain exactly what happened after that because at this point everything kind of gets really fuzzy. *Fentanyl will do that to you.* The procedure I had was unlike my typical endoscopy. This was something a little bit deeper it's called a gastroendoduandoscopy.
If you thinking to yourself what the fuck is that? Then perfect we're on the same page. Let's break it down…
Gastro: Stomach
Endo: Esophagus
Duadno: Duodenum (it's an area after the stomach, prior to the intestines)
-oscopy: inspection by scope.

My surgical team, doctors and nurses were on point. My GI doc did a fantastic procedure and didn't bruise my lips. (If you go in for an endoscopy, wear ChapStick, you're basically gonna make out with Legos for ten minutes.)

Before the incident, I was actually scheduled for my routine scope two weeks following my ER trip, couldn't wait that long, i guess.

The scope revealed no real threatening abnormalities.

The bleed had been caused by irritation and some scraping in my stomach.

I have little recollection what happened after the procedure, I remember flashes of a car ride, the entire debacle was exhausting to say the least.

I'll have a follow up in January, from there we'll determine when treatment should occur.

I'm going to use this whole shitty experience to highlight one incredibly valuable lesson I learned from this.

Besides my HCV, I am healthy and fit. It's paramount that when you live with any disease you must mitigate comorbidity (multiple diseases/medical issues) by minimizing your risks. Physical and mental fitness are your friends :)

This wasn’t a cake-walk getting to this point, it’s hard and it’s a little maddening and it took months. Every day, every moment is its own unique struggle. I look at one hurdle, isolate it, and take it down at my leisure. My first three weeks were a constant struggle as I combated the daily one to two hour muscle spasms. But once I built up the muscle and began to better fight my atrophy, it slowly became easier. My point is that it’s not easy, but do it anyway. Work your way to healthy how best you can and…Start.

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