

5,300-year-old Iceman may have suffered from bacterial ulcers

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Wracked by arthritis, bitten by ticks, and murdered atop an icy mountain 5,300 years ago, Otzi the “Iceman” also carried ulcer-causing bacteria, scientists reported.

The *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria was retrieved from the mummified stomach of the ancient 40-year-old man killed by an arrow wound and frozen in the Alps, who was uncovered by hikers in 1991. *H. pylori* is now the oldest microbe to be genetically mapped.

Otzi has been studied for two decades for insight into early Europeans — he died wearing elaborate fur clothing, armed with a copper axe, and covered with 61 tattoos (making him the oldest known tattooed man). Now researchers are examining his gut microbes, or microbiome, for more clues to the life and death of the Iceman.

“He had a very rough life,” study lead author Frank Maixner of the European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano in Italy told reporters at a telephone briefing. “We cannot be 100% certain he suffered gastric distress but we can say his immune system was reacting to the bacteria.”

Today, roughly half of all people worldwide are infected by *H. pylori*, which lives in the acidic human stomach and about 10% of the time causes ulcers. Varied strains of the bacteria are tied to populations across the world, with modern-day Europeans afflicted by a unique one that appears to be a mixture of older African and Asian ones.

Read full, original post: [This Famous Ancient “Iceman” Had Ulcer Bacteria In His Gut](#)