



# Healthy Lifestyles

## Canadians need to get serious about seasonal flu

(NC)—Despite its seriousness, a large proportion of Canadians do not consider influenza a potentially life-threatening disease. However, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada, 4,000 - 8,000 Canadians die every year due to influenza-related complications.

In recent Ipsos Reid surveys of more than 1,200 Canadians, only seven per cent of parents said the first thing they would do at the onset of flu symptoms is make a doctor's appointment. A significant number said their first response to treating influenza is bed rest (35%), and/or over-the-counter medication (33%).

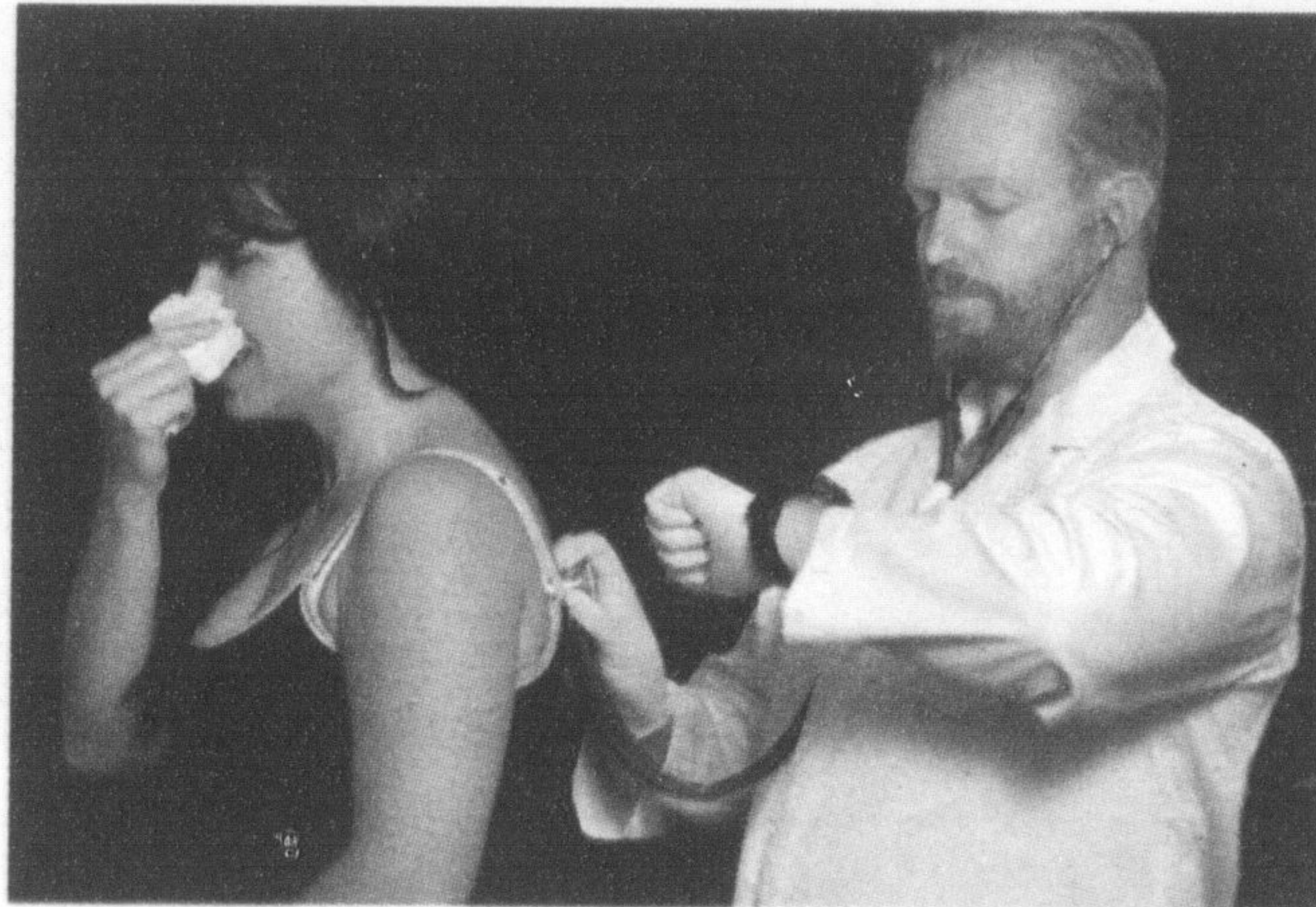
Many Canadians believe that once they are sick with the flu, there is little they can do other than ease the symptoms. Fewer than 20 per cent of people were aware that antiviral medications exist as a treatment option to make them feel better faster and prevent serious secondary complications.

Interestingly, 76 per cent of parents stated that if they knew a prescription medication was available that would speed up their recovery and help protect their family from the flu they would ask their doctor for it.

"Getting vaccinated and washing your hands regularly are the best means to prevent influenza. However, influenza still causes thousands of infections in Canada every year," says Dr. Allison McGeer, director of infection control at Mount Sinai Hospital. "Bed rest, fluids and over-the-counter medications can help soothe flu symptoms; however antiviral medications can prevent complications, and make people feel better faster."

### Be Prepared:

The Canadian National Advisory Committee on Immunization encourages all Canadians to prepare for the flu season by getting their annual vaccine shot, yet only 38 per cent of adults and 34 per cent of children get vaccinated against sea-



sonal flu, according to the survey. Ask your doctor about the flu vaccine and the important role that hand hygiene and antivirals can play in protecting you from influenza.

### Think about Prevention:

Although the flu is a highly contagious virus, avoiding the spread of the flu is not top of mind with Canadians. For most, feeling better is the number one priority. In addition to annual vaccination, antiviral medications attack the influenza virus, and thus prevent the infection from getting worse and help to prevent it from spreading to other people.

### Know the Treatment:

Antiviral medications are the only prescription medicines available to treat the flu. Antibiotics are not effective against the influenza virus.



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## Helping yourself and your child through trauma

**Do you feel stressed lots of the time?** Seem to react or overreact to minor events? Feel completely lethargic and unable to find energy to do even the simplest things. You are not alone and you may be dealing with the aftereffects of trauma.

**What are traumatic events?** There are events that most would objectively agree are traumatic: serious car accidents, being raped or beaten, near drownings, life threatening illnesses. However, many "everyday" events can also be taken on as trauma. These include being yelled at, minor surgeries that involve anesthesia, fender benders, falling off a bike. These events can lead to high levels of nervous system arousal or energy build-up that essentially, if not discharged, leaves our system "all revved up with no place to go".

**How much energy are we talking about?** You've no doubt heard of the (true) story of a "little old lady" who manages to pull a car off a child. In that moment of threat, she manages to direct all the energy that is racing through her system to the very focused action of lifting the car. By lifting the car, the woman created an opportunity to lower her nervous system activation so that it could come back into balance. Imagine all that energy with no outlet; all that survival energy getting "stuck" in the body and the nervous system. This stuck energy is what creates "trauma symptoms".

The various symptoms of trauma result from the body's attempt to "manage" and contain this unused energy. Some physical symptoms include chronic pain, immune system problems (colds, flues), fatigue. Emotionally, we might feel depressed, helpless, rage. In relationships, we might end up not asserting ourselves or in abusive relationships or alternately, we become controlling. Consider the example of what happens when we are yelled at or feel stressed:

- we tense our shoulders or neck - this becomes a routine reaction and before we know it we have chronic neck problems
- we shy away and avoid conflict - when this becomes routine we find ourselves unable to assert or confront when it is healthy. Maybe we even end up in abusive relationships.

*Humans we are extremely resilient and have been able to recuperate from the most horrendous tragedies*

- we hold in our own emotional experience, say anger - like a beach ball held under water, next thing you know it starts to find its way out, sometimes as rage, with little provocation.

**Healing trauma:** "Somatic Experiencing®" (SE) is a short-term naturalistic approach to the resolution and healing of trauma developed by Dr. Peter Levine. SE employs the awareness of body sensation to help people "renegotiate" and heal their traumas rather than relieve them. With appropriate guidance with the body's instinctive "felt sense," individuals are able to access their own built-in immunity to trauma, allowing the highly aroused survival energies to be safely and gradually discharged. When these energies are discharged, people frequently experience a dramatic reduction in or disappearance of their traumatic symptoms. Some also experience healing on much deeper levels, what is often described as an "awakening" to feelings of empowerment and connection with the world.

**Tips for dealing with trauma:** First, and foremost, find safety. Once you are safe, the most useful thing you can do is just observe what's happening in your body without judgment, just watching and understanding that your body has the innate ability to regain its balance if you just let it feel what it feels, and give it the time to do what it wants to do. In particular, look for signals that energy is discharging. These include: trembling, shaking or sweating; warmth in our body; stomach gurgling; breathing deeply; crying or laughing. These are good, it means that you are discharging some of this the energy and coming back into balance. It also is very important to stay 'grounded.' If you are feeling disoriented, confused, upset and in disbelief, sit on a chair, feel your feet on the ground, press on your thighs, feel your behind on the seat, and your back supported by the chair; look around you.

**Tips for helping your children deal with trauma:** If trauma happens to your children, again first and foremost find safety. Once you are all safe, and just as an airline attendant would instruct adults to put their oxygen mask on prior to helping a child, it is important that you pay attention and calm your internal state. Once YOU are more settled, you are better able to help your child. You will want to pay attention to your child's bodily responses and reactions and validate these by not trying to stop them. For example, if your child is trembling, shaking or crying, let that happen. Support these reactions with your words or touch. For example, put a hand on your child's shoulder or back and use reassuring words such as "that's o.k....it's ok to cry...feel angry...shake....just let it happen". After your child's physical response has settled, validate his or her emotional response. Let your child know that whatever he or she is feeling is o.k., and that you will stay close by and are available to listen. Resist the temptation to "talk your child out" of fear, sadness, anger, shame or distract him or her. Your child needs to be given permission to feel what he or she is feeling.

In closing, as humans we are extremely resilient and have been able to recuperate from the most horrendous tragedies. Furthermore we have the ability to let ourselves be transformed by the process of healing our traumas. Trauma is a fact of life, but it doesn't have to be a life sentence.

**About the author:** Dr. Donna Lockett (PhD) is a psychologist with a private practice in Milton. Donna has been studying psychology and healing for over 20 years and has advanced clinical training in several modalities including Gestalt Therapy, Somatic Experiencing Trauma Healing, non-violent communication, Transpersonal Therapy. As a long-time educator, Donna also offers seminars and workshops on healing for the general public and health professionals. For more information contact Donna at: [donna@clearsolutions4u.com](mailto:donna@clearsolutions4u.com) or call 905-302-9481.

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