



By Gwen Sampson

It is a concerning moment when a patient comes in the office and says the following. "Doctor, I ache all over, even my skin hurts. I have a brutal fever and a rotten headache. I had a sore throat and now I feel like I am going to be sick to my stomach - I need an antibiotic."

You don't need to be a physician to recognize that this poor soul probably has the "flu" or more accurately the influenza virus. It is far more severe than the common cold and lasts much longer.

There are two primary strains of the flu, those being A and B, and there are subtypes of each. The fight against the influenza begins with producing vaccines based on the types of flu outbreaks seen in other parts of the world that have the illness before we do. It is not a perfect science but has proven very successful in the past. Immunization can prevent 70-90% of illness in healthy adults and children.

Influenza is a virus and antibiotics do not work on viruses. The challenge with the infection is that it is spread by droplet usually by way of a cough or sneeze. Adults can spread the virus a day before they actually become ill and for seven days after they are sick. Children can spread the germ for up to ten days after being sick. This type of spread is best dealt with by strategies of prevention.

Let's talk about prevention for a moment.

When people come into the doctor's office it usually is for diagnosing an illness or for early screening to catch an illness before they are actually sick. (Examples - mammograms, colonoscopies, and your annual health check up). Those are not preventative measures; they are early detection. Immunization is one of the few ways to truly prevent disease despite being for some folks a controversial issue. While I respect patients concerns about immunization, vaccines have been the mainstay in reducing death and illness in our population particularly the very young and the frail elderly. As an aside, watch the news for information about the rise in Pertussis or whooping cough in some provinces and territories. This comes from under vaccination in children and the now recognized need to reboost our adult populations. I have seen whooping cough in children and adults. It is horrifying.

Aside from immunization as a form of prevention, influenza spread can be reduced by good hand washing, cleaning of toys and utensils, sneezing into a tissue or crook of your arm and staying home when you are sick.

FLU FACTS

- The vaccine lasts under one year and thus the need to reimmunize yearly.
- Some people express concerns revaccine side effects. Serious consequences are

rare - 1 in a million and these might include a disorder called Guillain Barre Syndrome or Oculo-respiratory syndrome. Most common is soreness at the injection site.

- You CANNOT get the flu from the injectable form of vaccine. It is an inactivated or "killed" viral combination of three flu strains. The coat or outer shell of the virus is injected into a muscle in your shoulder and your immune system memorizes its appearance and will send out "killer" antibody cells if you come in contact with the live virus. There is an inhaled form of the vaccine for children ages 2-17. It is a live vaccine that covers four strains of flu. Side effects from this are also rare.

- The flu shot is safe in pregnancy and in nursing women. Immunizing these women will also protect their infants as antibodies

to the virus can be passed to the babies for up to six months after vaccination. Children under 6 months do not get the flu vaccine as their immune system is too immature for it to work.

- Egg allergy MAY NOT be a reason to avoid the flu shot. Discuss with your health care provider.

- There are antiviral drugs if you get the flu but these are not without side effects. The best way to fight the flu is to prevent it.

Our Health Matters

'TIS THE SEASON... FOR THE FLU

Ramblin' Ruth



Turkey Not to Your Taste? Try These Christmas 'Feasts' from Around the World

By Ruth LeBlanc
Stouffville Free Press

Christmas dinner is prepared in some unusual ways in other parts of the world.

Take South Africa for instance. Instead of turkey with all the fixings like we have in Canada, you can partake in a large pan of deep fried Emperor Moth caterpillars. Those chewy creepy crawlers delight the locals as they devour the delicacy on Christmas Day. Not in the mood for insects? Let's travel to Greenland and have a serving of Christmas Mattak. Yummy raw whale skin is served with blubber and if this doesn't tickle your Yuletide palate then have some Kiviak instead. Exactly five hundred auk birds are stuffed into a seal skin and left to ferment for seven months. When the big day arrives cut that baby open and let the celebrations begin!

Unmarried men and women in Sweden love to see the traditional rice pudding buried among the creamed rice and raisins. The lucky person who gets the coveted almond will be married within a year. This is a dish without insects or blubber so it might

be worth the journey if you are looking for love.

Close to home in Great Britain, making the traditional Christmas pudding is a family affair. Each member must stir the pudding mix in a clockwise direction before it is cooked, making a wish as they do so. Topped with a rich sauce after a turkey supper this is one dessert many of us enjoy at home and is a tradition we share.

Last eating destination for Christmas is Slovakia where the most senior man of the household has a special duty to perform. A lokska pudding is placed in front of him and he takes one large tablespoon and throws it at the ceiling. The more of the sticky concoction that sticks the better it is. Although I have never been to Slovakia I have unintentionally had a can of cooked sweetened condensed milk explode and stick to the ceiling. As the men laugh the women must roll their eyes as they clutch a cleaning cloth.

This year as others I will stick with the traditional and just enjoy the best part of every Christmas meal - the people I share it with.

Merry Christmas to All!

farmer Jack's LANDSCAPE SUPPLIES GARDENS

STOUFFVILLE SENIOR OF THE MONTH

BETH FROST

AGE: 92

NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE STOUFFVILLE AREA:

39 years. Beth and her husband "Mac" Frost arrived here on their 25th wedding anniversary in 1976. They had purchased some farm land and were going to make it into a golf club. Today it is a 54 hole course called Spring Lakes Golf Club.

CAREER: Beth and Mac were married in 1951 and they immediately began building Cedarbrae Golf Club on some farmland the family had bought along Steeles Avenue. After many years of successful operation they sold the Club to the members and moved to Stouffville to start all over again!

FAMILY: Beth's daughter Cynthia operates the family's golf club in Barrie and her grandson Jason lives in Waterloo.

HOBBIES: Beth is an avid gardener and her efforts have achieved recognition both in Canada and the United States. Among other positions she is Chair of International Affiliates of the National Garden Council of the U.S.A. Beth has had the opportunity to judge and admire flowers and gardens in many countries during her trips all over the world.

PET PEEVE: Younger people who don't pay attention to elderly folk.

LIFE HIGHLIGHT: Offering flower arranging advice to the Princess of Monaco.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY?

If you win the lottery you should give some money to everyone who has been nice to you. This is not a problem Beth expects to have, she's never bought a lottery ticket for herself!



IF YOU KNOW A SENIOR THAT IS WORTHY OF SENIOR OF THE MONTH GIVE US AN E-MAIL AT FARMERJACKS@ROGERS.COM

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