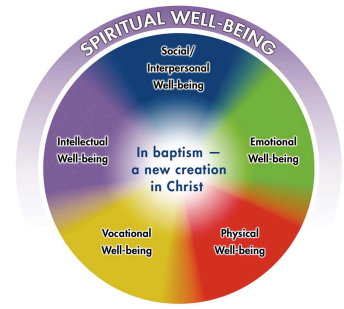


## Flu Season

### From the Bethany Lutheran Church Health and Wellness Cabinet

*“The LORD sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.” – (Psalm 41:3)*



Copyright 1997 InterLutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Well, it's coming around again. The yearly alerts from the government, health care providers, and Walgreens about viruses that feed on us, torment us, and generally create another opportunity for suffering and healthcare promotion. It's kind of like tax season; it shows up every year, and we either face some suffering or sigh in relief at having avoided some pain.

Seasonal concern about the flu threat and its effects really has become routine in our culture, including the Lutheran culture. When I joined the Lutheran church I knew I had a lot to learn. A couple of years after joining I remember hearing a podcast of Garrison Keillor's weekly monologue about Lake Wobegon. He mentioned that the flu season was in full swing, and that down at the Lake Wobegon Lutheran Church people had stopped "sharing the peace" – and I knew what he was talking about! It didn't quite rise to the level of making me a Lutheran scholar, but I was able to see the humor in it, having shared the peace each Sunday for the years since joining the church.

Of course, influenza as a disease is nothing to laugh at. The terrible influenza epidemic of 1918 killed more people than World War I did -- approximately 20 to 40 million souls perished worldwide. One year of that flu outbreak killed more people than four years of the bubonic plague that ravaged 14<sup>th</sup> century Europe. So there is good reason that concern arises each fall as we face yet another variety of this yearly infestation.

So how do we approach being good stewards of the bodies God has given us in light of this threat? Here are some common sense recommendations about the whole thing, with representative information offered by Kaiser Permanente's current web site:

*1. Hand washing is one of the most important things you can do to keep from getting and spreading colds and the flu. Using plain soap and warm water is as effective as using antibacterial soap. Carry an alcohol-based hand gel to use when you can't wash. View videos from the CDC on teaching your kids to wash their hands and practice other healthy habits.*

*2. Eating well (including antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables), getting plenty of rest, managing stress, and exercising can help you resist infection. Children and adults (especially seniors 65 or older) who have a chronic health condition or weakened immune system should get a pneumonia vaccination.*

*3. Kick the habit. If you smoke, there are a variety of resources to help you quit. Keep your children away from secondhand smoke. It's bad for their health and can cause cold-like symptoms.*

*4. Cover your cough. Cold and flu viruses are spread through the air. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve to trap the virus. If you cough into your hands, wash them as soon as you can.*

*5. Clean your home. A sick person can spread germs by touching counter tops, telephones, toys, cups, or bathroom sinks. Keep a cold- and flu-free kitchen.*

*6. Use disposable tissues. Viruses can live on cloth handkerchiefs, so use — and throw away immediately — disposable tissues to reduce spreading your illness to others.*

*7. Avoid touching your face. Try not to rub your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.*

*8. Try not to pass it on. Stay home and rest when you're sick. Really need to go out? Be careful not to expose others. If you have a fever, wait at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.*

And it seems clear that despite the best thinking of the good people of Lake Wobegon, we don't have to stop sharing the peace. As the Kaiser website points out, if you are actively ill stay home and rest. If you have the technology remember you can probably find text and even audio version of the week's sermons on the web site. And when you do come to be with your fellow Christians at church regularly, the affiliation can even help your immune system. And you will find soap and water at the church, so cleanliness next to Godliness is possible even with the flu bug around! – Peace and health, Jack Lindsey.

© 2010 Bethany Lutheran Church, Denver, Colorado – To request permission to reprint this column call 303-758-2820 or navigate to <http://www.bethany-denver2.org/about-us/contact/>