

## UNDER THE WEATHER

“I assume that to prevent illness in later life, you should never have been born at all.”

--George Bernard Shaw

I note, as our children progress from growing up to all grown up, there is a marked difference in how we celebrate holidays. We no longer throw up, as a rule. Our eardrums do not rupture. We do not break out in festive spots. When the five kids were tiny, that was as much a part of special days as fireworks and Yule logs: the ill-timed illness. The New Year we toasted with Robitussin. The Thanksgiving when the temperature of the roasting children rivaled the temperature of the roasted turkey. The Memorial Day memorialized as the Chicken Pox Wedding. Pop an Advil with me, won't you, as we stroll down memory lane?

My own holiday health report growing up was none too good (like the four New Year's Eves in a row that I had strep throat), so I shouldn't have been too surprised. But, like most new moms, I entered maternity confident that my offspring would be Superbabies, the hardiest of stock. After all, staying healthy was a simple matter of proper diet, fresh air and good hygiene, right? I nursed, I took them on brisk walks, I scrubbed my hands till they were raw. Results? Sheridan was in the ER with bronchitis over Fourth of July weekend. Evan endured a nasty bout of rotavirus, landing in Abington Hospital (week before Easter). Rosie had colic (Christmas), PJ had a whopping double ear infection (Halloween), Julie ended up in Abington with RSV, respiratory syncytial virus (New Year's week). Seems my sickness track record trumped all my precautions after all.

For sheer drama, though, none of the array of childhood illnesses equaled the quadrifecta, the Chicken Pox Wedding. It was Memorial Day weekend, 1993. We were invited to our niece's wedding in Kansas City. More than invited, involved. Evan was ringbearer; Rose was flower girl. At that point in parenthood, we were so starved for fun and frolic that the prospect of a flight to Kansas with four kids under age six rivaled a Club Med vacay.

So, naturally, Evan came home festooned with red dots, three weeks before the Big Day. After diagnosis, our pediatrician prescribed Aveeno baths and a calendar...if we could make it past day 21 we were home free; the rest of the kids would most likely emerge from this bout of the pox unscathed.

Wedding Day minus one. Wedding rehearsal. Evan, a little scabby but otherwise adorable in his tiny tux. Rose, clear-skinned and cute in her flower girl regalia. Out of the woods, nearly!!

Carrie's Wedding Day! Sunny skies, happy guests, radiant bride. Evan does not lose the rings. Rosie does not lose her cool. The couple is united. It is a spotless moment in time.

Wedding Day plus one. We are relaxing in my sister-in-law's home, watching the Indianapolis 500 on TV (this is a family from Indiana, so the 500 is sacred ground), anticipating a couple of days R&R in Kansas City. Sheridan queries, "What's this red thing on my ear?" Simultaneously, Rose pipes up, "I have one of those on my face!" PJ just squirms and scratches a red thing on his nose. We call Delta Airlines, pronto. Can we make it on board before a major breakout and our sure quarantine? Turns out we can, barely. Our voyage home is a tense affair, tenser still because we can't seem to get Rosie to quiet down ("Hey, Mom, here's annuder pox!! And I see annuder pox!!")

Home, to two weeks of more Aveeno baths and misery. Annuder holiday bites the dust.

I realize, with humble gratitude, that our parade of woes pales in comparison to families who battle truly serious illnesses. We have been lucky indeed to endure merely the usual aches and pains. But it has been sort of comical to note that many of our under-the-weather times coincide with "special" times on the calendar.

We live in this suspension, don't we? Happy/unhappy, good news/bad news? When all around us are dancing, how often are we in the doldrums? It can feel as if we live out of sync with the world.

But we are never alone. We have a God who is there through the happy and unhappy equally, the healthy and sick alike, the good news/bad news all the same. Out of sync with the world, we still live in sync with the One who made us and cares for us through it all. Who clears up those ear infections and tummy wobbles, in His time. Irrespective of the assigned dates of man-made festivity, our bodies travel through life, sometimes well, sometimes ill. All times loved.

So this year we will probably not mark the holidays with Benadryl and humidifiers. But we will always remember the baby years when we did, when we shepherded our little ones past the shoals of those first small calamities. And we will marvel at, and give thanks for, the healthy young adults our kids have become.

Happy, pox-free holidays. God bless us, everyone.

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