

You can't spell 'hypochondria' without 'parody'



JONN
KMECH

"Instead of risking contraction by venturing into the world, simply use my handy self-diagnosis guide. If you're coughing, it's probably swine flu; if you're coughing up blood, it's probably tuberculosis. But if pus and blood are exploding out of all your orifices, you can rest easy — that isn't one of the main symptoms of swine flu. You have Ebola."

It's the end of August again. The birds are chirping, the leaves are majestically beginning to change colour, and the guillotine is once again coming down on the head of the kicking, screaming body of summer. This means only one thing: the start of a new semester and all the various stresses associated with it, particularly if you're a freshman.

As if there wasn't enough to be apprehensive about, reports are stating that this fall, universities will be a major frontline in the battle against swine flu. Orientation leaders aren't trained to talk about your school experience in the context of a flu epidemic, so you could find yourself left in the lurch. And that's the point where I come in with my refreshing guidance and soothing, cheerful optimism.

The first thing you may notice when you get to campus is Quad. Take note: this giant field in the middle of the University is a wonderful vibrant place to play frisbee, have a sunny picnic lunch, or store massive numbers of infected bodies during a rampant viral outbreak in a freezing cold winter. Shovels are available in the Bookstore for nominal fees.

But don't let that worry you for at least another month; you've got

more pressing issues to fret about right now, like moving into residence. This can be a frightening experience by itself without having to contend with a renegade bug. But if you're living in Lister, it should calm your nerves to know that swine flu is probably the least contagious infection you'll catch there and will be much more forgiving on your groin region. Regardless, there's a high probability that your roommate could be from the Paleolithic era, so his hygiene should be suspect.

Even though people who breathe through their mouth are arguably less likely to pass on a virus, they still might be harbouring microbes in their clothes and fur. To remedy this, spray down everything on their side of the room, including your roommate while they sleep, with bleach. This will have the dual effect of both killing all pathogens and ensuring that your roommate wakes up in a timely manner so you won't have to wait for the washroom while they spend hours dealing with agonizing chemical burns.

Now, in the wake of a highly infectious virus, does it make sense to sit in an enormous chamber filled with potentially contaminated strangers for over an hour? Realize that to do well in university, you'd

better be intelligent enough for your answer to be "no," so you obviously already know by now that going to class is not only discouraged — it's potentially deadly. As the virus surges through campus, you can be proud knowing that your movie-and-video-game "me" time at home will be spent in the isolation necessary for you to be healthy for midterms. On the flip side, purposefully contracting swine flu is an excellent way to have a perfectly legitimate excuse to not be healthy for your midterms.

However, should you ever come out of your self-imposed exile and remove your biohazard suit, you'll be exposing yourself to dangers both communicable and cultural. It's certainly lucky for students that German scientists recently discovered that obscene quantities of alcohol have been shown to both make awkward social situations much easier and be one of the most effective treatments for swine flu. Remember that drinking enough to knock out a male silverback will ensure that no virus can destroy your insides as efficiently as you can all by yourself. Plus, while you're table-dancing with your pants flying around your head, you'll be able to boldly claim you're doing at least as much to prevent the spread of swine flu as those people who weren't eating pork.

If such liver-pickling, illegitimate-child-having inebriation doesn't disinfect you, then you may very well contract H1N1. The only rational solution is to panic, because you might as well have Ebola. Thankfully, the University has a Health Clinic for students on second floor of SUB. But under no circumstances should you do something idiotic like actually visit there — the waiting room is likely full of people with swine flu, and you haven't even been diagnosed yet.

Instead of risking contraction by venturing into the world, simply use my handy self-diagnosis guide. If you're coughing, it's probably swine flu; if you're coughing up blood, it's probably tuberculosis. But if pus and blood are exploding out of all your orifices, you can rest easy — that isn't one of the main symptoms of swine flu. You have Ebola. Please hold your celebrations far away from the rest of us.

With all this advice fresh in your mind, you should be one of the few survivors left on campus by the time first semester ends. Considering your physical appearance, this is actually a blessing, as the dating pool will be that much smaller and less choosy, so you might actually find a significant other. Just make sure to bleach them down before trying to do anything remotely romantic; for all you know, they could be a carrier.

THE BURLAP SACK

Dear Costco,

I really do love you. I appreciate that you sell things oh so cheap and in such disgustingly large quantities that they seem to last forever. I can even forgive you for charging me a fee to shop within your fluorescent-lit confines. But selling Christmas cards in August? Really?

Sure, they don't exactly spoil or go moldy, but Christmas is four months away, and you're still hocking backpacks and binders. There's something so perverted about a Christmas/Back-to-School shopping overlap that I'm afraid we can't see each other any more.

We can still be civil about this. I'm not returning that 20-pack of muffins you gave me, and I'm not expecting my membership fee back. Maybe we can someday be friends, but right now, being reminded of all of the financial and temporal stresses of the holiday season when I'm navigating all of the financial and temporal stresses of the back-to-school season is too much. Reindeer-sugar-cookies, wacky seasonal sweaters, and yes, cards with heartfelt messages are all things that fill me with great joy — at Christmas.

I'm sorry it had to end this way. On the bright side, I can still pick up an obscenely large tub of Halloween candy on my way out. I'll even send a card. Only 119 days 'til Christmas. But who's counting?

SARAH STEAD

The Burlap Sack is a semi-regular feature where a person or group who needs to be put in a sack and beaten is ridiculed in print. No sack beatings are actually administered.

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2009

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