

The Plague

Posted on Mar 10, Posted by [Webmaster](#) Category [Telling Tales](#)

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I avoid sick people and hospitals like the plague. My hypochondria started as a small child. Probably when I would complain to my parents that I had a headache and Dad would look up from his paper and say“maybe it’s a tumor.” My brother would then chime in...“don’t go to sleep tonight, you might not wake up.” They would both start laughing, until my mom would tell them ...“leave her alone, you know how she is.”

Given my condition, my hospital stays for the birth of my children were excruciating for me and everyone that was with me. While those around me were trying to focus on the joyous event, I, on the other hand, was sure I'd be that one in a million person who would catch incurable hospital staph. Every time the nurse came into give me a shot I'd ask ... "Is that a new needle? Did you wash your hands? Are you sure you washed for 5 minutes because I don't think that was 5 minutes? Why are you always writing things down in my chart?"

This same "illness" forces me to turn the channel whenever ER or Grey's Anatomy comes on television. The minute the sick person describes their symptoms, I immediately believe that I'm suffering from the same incurable disease. Of course, this leads me to get out a mirror to check if, I too, am growing fur on my tongue.

Given these deficiencies in my character, when my kids get sick, they are pretty much SOL. Considering, however, that I'm not a single parent, you would think that their father might pick up the slack. But he's no better. Each time one of the children gets sick, he gets out his chalk, draws a circle around himself and says ...don't cross this line- I can't afford to get sick."

Cut to the past few weeks – the kids have been battling colds, stomach viruses, and lastly strep. I've had to be their Florence Nightingale – albeit a somewhat more neurotic version. Each morning I've had them touch their chin to their chest (fyi - the universal test for meningitis) in case their doctor was wrong when he said "it's JUST a cold."

This morning, however, I woke up thinking the nightmare might finally be over. Just then, my husband stumbled to the kitchen and said "my throat hurts...I think I've caught IT!" After my last five sleepless nights, cleaning up throw up, and endless hours at the doctor's office...I'm in no mood.

"What exactly might IT be?" I ask.

"I don't know but I can't swallow and have the worst headache."

"Hmmm... sounds like a tumor. You might not want to go to sleep tonight."

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