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In Their Own Words

Curated by Gina Neist

With the cold winter weather keeping folks indoors, many of us have recently experienced an episode of “the flu.” This has been a well-documented problem in our communities for as long as records have been kept. It is interesting to read how our ancestors dealt with the common cold and the more dangerous cases of influenza. Sounds like good advice even today!

Influenza in 1918 *by Welthy Mueller, published in the January 20, 2000 EHS Newsletter*

I was going to Christian School in 1918 until 1927.

There were several persons who died during that winter of 1918; a few from the school and others who were church members.

My sister was born on July 4, 1919 and walking when she took sick with the flu. When she recovered, she had to learn to walk all over again.

They were using something called “assafidity” to ward off the germs. The Pastor would use some to kill germs when he went to visit the sick.

From the 1927 Library of Health

Influenza, or La Grippe, is an acute infectious disease. It spreads with remarkable rapidity. The worst epidemics have been in the colder seasons of the year.

Incubation is from one to four days. The onset is usually abrupt, with fever and its associated phenomena. Usually there is sneezing, with or without watering of the eyes and headache. No age is exempt, as it attacks with impunity the infant as well as the old man.

There is generally a cough, to which is added very soon profuse expectorations. Isolation should be practiced if possible. Old people should be guarded against all sources of infection. The secretions should be disinfected.

In every case the disease should be regarded as serious and the patient kept in bed until the fever has completely disappeared. At the onset a warm bath is sometimes grateful in relieving the pains in the back and limbs.

