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## **The Flu Will Make You Suffer, One Way or Another** (682 words)

If you weren't able to get a flu shot because of the vaccine shortage, it probably means you weren't considered "high-need," like Senators and members of Congress. But as it turns out, it's no big deal! You don't have to worry, because I just read an article titled, "How To Avoid the Flu by Boosting Your Immune System."

When I first saw it, I stopped to daydream about what the article might say, like, "to boost your immune system, get lots of extra sleep." That would be a good one! Then the next time my husband, Steve, asked, "What are you doing sleeping in so doggone LATE?" I could answer - truthfully - "I'm boosting my immune system!" Or, maybe it would make the recommendation to "avoid stress." I'd have the perfect excuse for not balancing my checkbook! As I continued my fantasy, I hoped it might even advise, "to protect yourself from germs, stay away from large groups of children." No more chaperoning field trips for me...I'm protecting my immune system!

Then I got back to reality. I started to read the actual article, which turned out to be much less fun:

"Regular Hand Washing Prevents the Spread of Germs."

Of course I already do that, unless I'm in a hurry or something. But here's the thing: you need to wash your hands in a special way. You actually have to wait until the water gets warm, or preferably even hot. You have to lather your hands up with soap. Finally, you can't be in a rush. You need to take your time. In fact, there's a trick to make sure you're spending long enough – you should wash your hands for as long as it takes to say the entire alphabet. Just for fun, I tried it. Unfortunately, I only made it to "C." I guess I'll have to work on that one.

"Exercise Boosts the Immune System."

The only problem is, I've tried exercise incentives before. They haven't worked. As an incentive, I don't think "avoiding the flu" will work any better than "avoiding looking fat at my high school reunion." Besides, after I exercise I'm always completely worn out. That can't be good for my immune system! I'm sure it would be better to save that energy so my immune system could fight the flu.

“Eliminate Tobacco and Alcohol During the Flu Season, as They are Immune System Suppressors.”

Wait...isn't the flu season from now until like, April? All of a sudden I could think of something worse than getting the flu. Okay, I have to admit the part about “no tobacco” makes sense. I know using tobacco isn't healthy. And I'm pretty sure I can stick to that one, since I don't smoke anyway. But no ALCOHOL?? I don't have a drinking problem or anything, but there are certain occasions when I enjoy a nice bottle, er, I mean GLASS of wine. Birthdays or holidays, for example, or when there's something else to celebrate. I also like to have a glass, or sometimes two, to reward myself for special accomplishments, like cooking dinner or finishing the laundry before anyone runs out of clean underwear.

Anyway, I thought, this doctor must not be too bright, because even I know alcohol KILLS germs. Last flu season when I actually could get a flu shot, what did the nurse do to my arm? She sterilized it with ALCOHOL! The way I figure it, I could probably skip the whole hand-washing thing if I made a point to drink enough alcohol. I'd just kill those nasty germs from the inside!

After I finished reading, I came to a conclusion: compared to following all the advice in the article, getting the flu doesn't sound that bad. Sure, the first couple days are pretty awful. But I have a strategy. When I get the flu, I'll stretch it out for at least one extra day. That day will be heavenly. I'll spend it napping, eating, and catching up on daytime TV.

And when I'm fully recovered, I'll have something to celebrate.