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Transcript

Learn English Quickly [Lesson 96] Learn English Through Listening

Welcome

Hi, I'm Hilary and welcome to this latest podcast from Adept English. Two things we're asking you to do at the moment - firstly if you like what we're doing on Adept English, then please like us on Facebook. And secondly, if you know anyone else who's learning English, tell them about us! Using Adept English can really help people to learn English quickly - at least, much more quickly than using traditional methods of learning a language.



What Is The Flu?

Right at the moment, in the northern hemisphere, it's 'flu season. When I say the 'northern hemisphere', that means the top half of the earth, the top half of the world. If you imagine our planet, Planet Earth cut in half horizontally – so with a flat line through the middle, whatever is above that line is the northern hemisphere and whatever is below that line, is the southern hemisphere. The word 'flu is really 'influenza'. If you're not sure what I'm talking about – it's an illness, a virus and 'flu viruses are called things like H3N2 or H1N1. I'm sure you've all had 'flu at some point. You'll see it written in English as 'flu – F-L-U and sometimes with an apostrophe in front of it ['flu] – have a look at the transcript, if you're not sure. You can spell it with or without the apostrophe. So it's 'flu season at the moment in the northern hemisphere and when the seasons change, and winter moves, it'll be 'flu season in the southern hemisphere. So for example, peak 'flu season – that means the time of year, when there is most 'flu is August if you live in Australia, and it's February if you live in the US or the UK. So I don't know if you can hear it in my voice – I'm slightly ill this weekend. I don't think it's actually 'flu, more like a bad cold. There is a difference – if you have 'flu, then you're probably going to be in bed, suffering, with a high temperature.

Science To The Rescue?

Now every year scientists try to stay ahead of the 'flu virus – and try to develop vaccinations against it. A vaccination is when you go to your doctor and he or she gets a needle and puts into into your arm and vaccinates you. This means that you're less likely to get a certain illness. So each year, round the world, new 'flu vaccines are developed. The 'flu virus is very difficult to make a vaccine for – it mutates all the time. The verb 'to mutate' means 'to change'. Something that mutates – it's like you think you know what it looks like, then it changes and becomes something different. And this means that your immune system, the system in your body which protects you from illnesses, your immune system will often recognize a virus, if you've had it before. Your body



knows how to fight it. But, because the 'flu virus mutates, it changes, it's much harder for your immune system to protect you. And even vaccination can't protect you against it so well either. New vaccines are developed every year but it's hard to predict which 'flu viruses will be most common in the coming year. So quite often they get it wrong. But they always say that a 'flu vaccination or 'flu jab as you'll hear it called in the UK, will give you some protection. Apparently a virus is able to mutate more in one day than human beings did in several million years. So it's quite a battle.

But scientists are working on what they call a 'universal vaccine' which will work against any 'flu virus. And the hope is that 'flu may eventually be eradicated. That means got rid of, stopped, ended, like we've done with diseases like small pox. That wouldn't be great for pharmaceutical companies, those that make Sudafed and Vicks and other medicines – and probably not great for the makers of products like Kleenex. But can you imagine for the rest of us? Can you imagine, never ever having 'flu again – and it just not existing? Sounds good to me. And imagine the boost to the world's economy – all those days off work saved!

This Years Flu Season Is Worse Than Ever!

Apparently this season is worse for 'flu than previous ones because there is a lot of H3N2 around. That is one of the more virulent viruses. A virulent virus – that means a strong one – a virulent virus is difficult to kill and if you catch it, you're likely to be more ill than with other 'flu viruses. For most people, catching 'flu just means a few days off work. But for some people – usually the old and the young, or those with other illness, which might make breathing more difficult, catching 'flu can be quite dangerous. When more people than usual catch a virus, it's called an epidemic. When even more people catch it and it's spread over a wide geographical area, like a whole country, it's called a pandemic. The last global pandemic was the Hong Kong 'flu (1968-1969) which killed approximately a million people. The Asian 'flu pandemic (1957-1958) started in China and is meant to have killed between one and four million



people. Spanish 'flu (1918-1919) killed between 50-100 million people worldwide. So 'flu can be very serious. It's a bit scary, when you think also that travelling by plane, flying is one of the main ways in which viruses like 'flu travel round the world And of course, there's a lot more airline travel now than when those 'flu pandemics happened.

But obviously most people don't die, when they catch the 'flu. It just means a few days off work. Now the best way to avoid 'flu is to keep washing your hands. Stay away from peoples' tissues and wash your hands frequently to avoid transferring the virus. Apparently the 'flu virus can live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces, and up to 12 hours on tissues or clothes. And sneezing – so that's the verb 'to sneeze' - when you go 'Atchooo!' - if you see someone sneezing, hold your breath and perhaps walk out of the room. If someone sneezes, they can shoot the 'flu virus up to 8 metres! Yuck!

Your Age Matters

And there is a link between the year you were born and how good your immunity to different types of 'flu is. Apparently if you're over the age of 57 years, you have some immunity to H1N1 type 'flu. If you have immunity, it means you don't get ill with that particular virus. People born before 1968 were, in an experiment, in a study were 75% less likely to be very ill with H5N1 and were 80% less likely to die from it, than those people who were those younger than this. But people born before 1968 have little immunity to H7N9. At the same time, people born later than 1968 have good immunity to H7N9, but not H5N1. This seems to mean that whatever type of 'flu was going around, when you first caught 'flu or when you were a child and your immunity was developing – this is the type of 'flu which you have the most chance of resisting. This is the type of 'flu for which you have most immunity for the rest of your life.

Goodbye



Anyway, that's probably enough talk about 'flu. You're probably glad that you're not in the same room as me, about to share my virus! If you are suffering from 'flu, then look after yourself, and I hope you're feeling better soon. And if you're not - then keep washing your hands and avoiding people who are sneezing. Enough for now, have a lovely day. Speak to you again soon. Goodbye.

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