

Valentine's day is the worst time to kiss, says disease expert

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(Medical Xpress) -- Say "I love you" with flowers, chocolates or a greeting card, but be careful when you kiss this Valentine's Day.

"Mid-February can be the peak season for infectious diseases, such as the seasonal and H1N1 flu, mononucleosis, colds and coughs," said Jorge Parada, MD, medical director, infectious disease at Loyola University Health System. "And don't rely on obvious signs of illness such as sneezing or fever as a tip-off. People with infectious diseases start shedding the virus before they experience the full effect of the illness."

Changing weather or temperatures are often blamed for winter's coughs and sniffles. But, in reality, colds, coughs and the flu are infectious diseases "caught" through transmission from one human to another. "Becoming too hot or too cold can cause stress to the body, weaken the defense in fighting off infections and thus make us more vulnerable," said Parada, who is also a professor of preventive medicine at Stritch School of Medicine. "But a person has to be exposed to a virus or bacteria to catch it." Dr. Parada thinks that winter trends such as staying indoors in crowded arenas such as shopping malls or movie theaters may promote winter colds and flu.

Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes

Drinking from the same wine glass or sharing dessert with the same fork may seem romantic, but it also may lead to infections. And keep your

chopstick to yourself, too.

“Someone can have a cold sore that hasn’t erupted yet and use lip balm, which is then shared, and the cold sore virus – otherwise known as herpes – is transmitted,” Parada said. Albeit less frequently, shared linens also are transmitters of infections. “A shared pillowcase, napkin or towel also can actually be a conduit for disease, especially if someone has a sore or cut,” Parada said.

Dos and Don’ts for Safe Displays of Affection

Do Give and Get a Flu Shot – “It’s the gift that keeps on giving; you protect yourself, your loved one and you stop the virus from spreading to others,” Parada said. “If that isn’t sexy and say ‘I love you,’ I don’t know what does.”

Don’t Share Utensils – “Humans can transmit some infections through saliva. A glass, fork or napkin can act as a bridge and pass the bug along to another person.”

Don’t Kiss or Have Close Body Contact if You Feel Unwell – “Throwing up and blowing your nose is not fun; no one wants to be ill, so being upfront and honest when you feel under the weather will be appreciated.”

Give the Flu the Kiss-off

Parada said it takes 10-14 days after injection for the flu shot to have full preventive effect. “Get that flu shot now to increase your odds for romance on Valentine’s Day,” Parada said. “Having a flu shot is definitely sexy. It beats the [flu](#) every time!”

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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