

NO DENTISTRY TODAY: FUN FACTS

This week I will not discuss the most requested fun topics of flossing and brushing. Instead I'll share some interesting non-dental information that I recently discovered.

In 1500's England, lead drinking cups and plates were easily made and became very popular. Foods with a high acid content, like the commonly eaten tomatoes, would leach lead into it causing coma or death. For over 400 years tomatoes were considered poisonous.

People drinking out of lead cups would sometimes go into a coma from lead poisoning. Their lips and fingernails would turn blue, and they were presumed dead so would be buried. The graveyards were so small that coffins were often dug up later to reuse the grave. The bones would be taken to a pit and buried in what was called the **BONE YARD**.

Sometimes, scratch marks were discovered in the coffins indicating that they were burying people alive. A string was then tied to the wrist of the supposed corpse, and it was lead up to a bell. Someone would sit out all night long on the **GRAVEYARD SHIFT** and listen for the bells to ring. If a bell rang they would quickly dig up the coffin and that person was **SAVED BY THE BELL**.

When someone was seen that looked like, or was, the person they had buried, they would say he was a **DEAD RINGER**. To reduce the chance of burying someone alive, people would lay the body out for a couple of days. Family would gather around, sing, eat, and drink, and see if the person would **WAKE** up to the noise and smell of food.

Bread was divided according to status. The workers would get the burnt bottom, the family would get the middle, and special guests would get the best part on top. They were referred to as the **UPPER CRUST**.

Pork was considered a very special food. When visitors came, bacon would be hung up. It was a sign of wealth to **BRING HOME THE BACON**. They would cut off a little to share with guests, and would sit around and **CHEW THE FAT**. The best cut of the pork was the tender back meat, so a person lucky enough to eat that part was considered **HIGH ON THE HOG**.

Most people got married in June because they would take their yearly bath about that time and smelled pretty good. To make sure, the bride would carry a bouquet of flowers to cover up any lingering odors. Baths consisted of a big tub with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then any sons and men, then the women, the children, and last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty they could lose someone in it, hence the saying, **DON'T THROW THE BABY OUT WITH THE BATH WATER**.

Houses were typically very low to the ground and had thatch piled high on the roof. It was a place where animals like dogs and cats could get warm. When it would rain the straw became very slippery and the animals would fall off the roof; **IT'S RAINING CATS AND DOGS**. There was no wood under the thatch to keep things from falling into the house. Mice, rats, bugs, and droppings could make it hard to sleep. The master of the house often had a bed with tall posts and hung a sheet over it for protection. This is why **CANOPY BEDS** were created.

The floors for the poor were generally dirt, therefore the term, **DIRT POOR**. The wealthy often had slate floors that would get slippery when wet in the winter. They would add thresh (straw) to make it less slippery. To keep it in, they would place a board along the base of the front of the door. This was called the **THRESHOLD**.

In the kitchen there would often be a big kettle that would hang over the fire. Every morning they would light the fire and add miscellaneous things to the stew. Meat was rare so mainly vegetables were added. Overnight, leftovers would chill, and then be heated the next day, and so on. **PEAS PORRIDGE HOT, PEAS PORRIDGE COLD, PEAS PORRIDGE IN THE POT NINE DAYS OLD**.

Here is one for the dental theme. Most people ate out of trenchers, which were usually scooped-out pieces of wood or old, hard, stale bottoms of bread loaves. They were never washed, so bacteria, mold, viruses, and worms often got into the trenchers. People eating from these dirty bowls were said to get **TRENCH MOUTH**. I heard a totally different story about the origin of the term "trench mouth", but this one is a little more pleasant. Have a safe and enjoyable summer and watch out for crazy drivers.