

No escaping life's Risks

by Nashila Mohamed of the Echo

One morning recently, troubled by persistent statistical hypochondria, I stirred restlessly in my sleep, tossing over a buried thought. Suddenly, I bolted upright, and froze to remember what it was. More people died in bed than anywhere else.

My life is full of risks. Everyday risks. I know, of course, that over the past decades, the human life span has increased from fifty years to seventy years. Many of the old dangers are gone — polio, starvation, being eaten by a bear, that sort of thing; but for me, everyday life is almost too dangerous to survive. In fact, I heard of a statistician who drowned in a stream that had an average depth of three inches.

I sigh and head for the bathroom. On the way, I pause to turn on the television set. But my hand freezes — Thank goodness, I remember there is a risk of something called 'X-radiation' from the set — I'd better leave it alone.

In the bathroom, I ignore the mouthwash. Saccharin, with a cancer potential has been banned from diet drinks in Canada but was okay for toothpaste and mouthwash until the end of the year.

Perhaps an aspirin for that slight headache. Nope. Health and Welfare Canada has said that accidental ingestion of overdoses of A.S.A. accounted for 9% of all poisoning cases reported in 1973. Better not risk it.

I walk from the bathroom, carefully watching where I step — some 1,600 Canadians die from falls each year, and one-third are falls on flat surfaces. I am worried all the time that I am in the house — 2,000 people die in house accidents each year.

Breakfast is always a hazard for me. Should I have the wieners that contain nitrites, which according to one U.S. study could combine with other chemicals to produce cancer in rats? Or eggs,

with cholesterol which clogs the old tubes?

Surely an orange? But Canada allows citrus red dye #2 to make orange skins look prettier. And there are Americans who say #2 is a no-no.

Is there nothing I can eat? Maybe just a handful of peanuts. But have they been properly stored? What about aflatoxin contamination? Everybody knows that peanut mould has killed 100,000 young turkeys in England.

I leave the house hungry. I can drive to work — but the risks ... the risks. Nineteen drivers killed last year. Or maybe my bike? No sir: Two bicyclists killed and 1,159 injured. I'd walk even though 1,000 pedestrians are killed in Canada each year.

At least it is daytime — the death rate is one-quarter that of night. And it isn't that most terrible time of all — the Friday night rush hour.

I am asked to lunch at a Chinese restaurant. Naturally, I



were killed last year. It isn't a pleasant drive. I keep wondering if any of the cars alongside or behind are stolen as 65,000 are in Canada each year. What worries me is that the driver of a stolen car is 200 times more likely to become involved in a crash than a driver using his own vehicle. And carbon monoxide. Why each year, 200 Canadians are killed by this gas. It's frightening. I hope the driver hasn't been drinking. Alcohol is involved in 50% of all automobile accidents. And I know it takes more than an hour to eliminate each 10-ounce bottle of beer or a shot of scotch.

Once home, I negotiate the stairs very carefully. There are 167 men who die from falls from or on stairs each year. Curiously enough, only 72 females do. Falling into a hole doesn't bother me — only 21 people did that in the last recorded year in Canada.

I am puffing a bit at the top of the stairs. Worrisome that heart

bronchitis emphysema and asthma at 13.7.

Over a sparse dinner of crackers, raw vegetables, cheese and fresh juice, listed as 'safe' foods by the Federal Department of Health and Welfare, I brood once again over my daily risks.

I watch television for a while, careful to stay four to six feet from the set, as the Health Protection Branch of Health and Welfare Canada recommends — "The Jeffersons" is worth the slight risk.

Heading up to bed, I toy with the idea of taking a sleeping pill. Better not — methapyrilene, an antihistamine which the U.S. Environment Defence Fund says is found in sleeping aids such as Compoz, Nytol, Sominex and Excedrin P.M. has been identified by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as a cause of cancer and will be banned in the U.S.

Still in bed at last, I feel happy for the first time today. I have solved one major risk problem — being on an airplane with a terrorist bomb aboard. The odds of being blown up in a plane with a bomb aboard are 20 million to one. So each time I travel by air I'm going to carry a bomb. The odds of being killed on a plane with two bombs aboard are 200 million to one.

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must refuse. Chow mein, sprinkled with monosodium glutamate, gives some people a burning sensation, facial pressure and chest pains.

I'll have a nice meat sandwich — except that 400,000 Canadians are poisoned by food every year and bacteria has a special feeling for meat sandwich spreads.

I don't even want to think of my summer holidays coming up. It is a hideous risk. August is the worst month of the year for accidents. I can't go out in a boat — 300 Canadians are drowned in

boating accidents each year. And coming back from the lake — Wow!! There are more accidents between 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. than any other time of the day.

I'll stay at home for my vacation. Of course, I am risking such things as fire. Some 800 Canadians die in fires each year

and 28% are caused by smoking — which I find far too dangerous — while another 13% are the result of faulty electrical equipment. And lightning caused 4%.

I accept an offer to be driven home, even though 13 passengers

diseases kill at the rate of 353.8 per 100,000 population each year, far beyond the next killer cancer at 149.1; accidents which drive Canadians into the grave at the rate of 34.1; pneumonia, the number four killer at 23.8 and



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