

## Backs That Ache.

By A. E. Hopkins.

BACKACHE IS AN ALL TOO common complaint. It may be the reflection of a simple body disorder, or a symptom indicating a deep seated organic disease.

Many people suffer needlessly from persistent and distressing aches in the region of the back, and they are far too frequently accepted as a condition to be borne with fortitude, but without undue seriousness.

It is a complaint that is exploited extensively by patent medicine manufacturers, as judged by the advertisements that can be seen on the street hoardings, in public vehicles and in all sorts and grades of magazines, newspapers and so on. From public statements of profits it seems that those who receive the most benefit from these doubtful remedies, be they liniments, pills or potions, are the manufacturers, and not the sufferers.

Backache may be classified as a persistent pain of a dull nature, which often locates itself in the small of the back, known as the lumbar region. At times it may manifest itself high up between the shoulder blades or at the other extreme, low down in the region of the sacrum and coccyx, referred in simple language, as the tail end of the spinal column.

The back is divided down its central length by the spine which encases the spinal cord, and the column of vertebrae is held in its position by a remarkable arrangement of muscles. This bony column, of immense strength, is the centre or principal part of the human frame, having connected to it, either directly or indirectly, all the bones of the body.

From the central position of this vertical column, the middle third as it were, is derived the word "backache," which is usually felt adjacent to the column, on the right or left sides, or on both at once.

It is obvious that pain or ache in this area must have a cause, and whilst the treatment of local symptoms may bring temporary relief, the removal of the cause is the only way that will effect a cure.

It is popularly believed that backache in men can always be attributed to kidney disturbances, whilst in women pelvic trouble in some form or other causes the trouble, but generally speaking, kidney dysfunction does not always cause backache. More likely it can be traced to digestive disturbances, constipation, dilation of the stomach and intestines, with their associated prolapses of the internal organs. Haemorrhoids can also cause a form of ache in the lumbar region.

Constipation in chronic form means sluggishness of the bowels, which retain body waste over a longer period than should be normal. The repercussion of this intestinal stasis is congestion in all the digestive organs of the abdomen. Noticeable backache symptoms of chronic constipation are tenderness at certain points on the abdomen, this developing to a disturbing degree. Thus to eliminate backache from this cause, treatment for constipation must be instituted, and when improvement in the bowel functions takes place, the backache will recede, degree by degree, as the cause is slowly removed.

In these cases a backache patient is often surprised when a doctor treats him or her for chronic constipation, when the distressing symptoms are in the region of the back, and which are more or less ignored by the physician,

who does not always get the credit for knowledge and diagnostic skill which he deserves.

In women who neglect the necessity for regular and complete bowel evacuation, an ache in the back creates thoughts of the possible surgical removal of the ovaries, and other organs peculiar to women, especially if they have passed their productive capacity for bearing children. In these cases also treatment which lays stress on suitable eating and adequate exercise often relieves the trouble in the back.

Women are subject to misplacement of the uterus caused by lack of tone in the area, often allied to digestive disturbances, such as stomach and bowel dilatation. When the backache occurs from these causes it can be traced to weakened and relaxed ligaments in the lumbar region, which have to bear an unnatural strain. Corrective diet and suitably prescribed exercise can help tremendously in relieving backache from dragging organic displacements, providing of course the actual disease is not present.

In pelvic disturbances the backache usually locates itself around the sacrum and the lower part of the spine but constipation, if present, should be relieved before special treatment is instituted. Exercise carefully graded, according to the severity of the disturbances, will strengthen the local musculature, thereby relieving the tendons of strain, bringing in many cases welcome relief from pain.

All rectal disorders including haemorrhoids have a tendency to create backache. This is the result of reflex pains radiating from the seat of the trouble to the small of the back. In some instances the left leg may be involved in the vicious circle, with sciatic pain developing therein. Congestion and varicosity of the local blood vessels contribute their quota to this painful condition, and here again constipation can often be blamed with just reason.

The prostate gland in men if enlarged or irritated can reflect its condition in backache, which has been in the past frequently mistaken for lumbago or sciatica.

The protruding and pendulous abdomen is a common sight in both men and women. It is a sure indication of personal body neglect, and it can cause backache of a particularly persistent type. Lack of exercise, sedentary occupation and overeating are common causes of this unsightly condition, which brings about a stretching effect on the mesentery, the fold of the peritoneum which connects the intestine to the posterior abdominal wall. A belt support can provide relief but at the most can only act as a crutch, and does nothing to disperse the cause of the condition. The abdominal and back muscles must be strengthened gradually by exercise, and a very careful attention to diet, restricting the starches and carbohydrates to a minimum. Incidentally, there is no surer and safer way to reduce excessive weight than to reduce the bulk of food and liquid intake, provided the dietary balance is observed.

Long neglect of abdominal protrusion may create an anterior or forward curvature of the spinal column in the lower third, creating intense aches in the lumbar regions.

Dyspepsia and other forms of an over-acid condition of the stomach can cause a reflexive pain high up in the shoulder region. Usually this departs when the stomach disturbance recedes, and need not cause undue worry. Generally speaking a pain under the right shoulder blade

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