

indicates a liver disturbance, whilst a pain on the left side, under the shoulder blade may mean that the heart is at fault, but in neither case, does it indicate conclusively that actual disease is present in the organs, but usually that a temporary dysfunction is the cause of the pain, which can be relieved by appropriate measures.

Nervous subjects, particularly the neurotic types, often complain of excessive weakness in the small of the back, and of pain in the lumbar muscles, but attention to the nervous disorder usually removes these troubles in due course.

It is not usual to associate backache with eyestrain, but it is quite possible that continued ocular strain will induce pain in the back. It is caused by contraction of muscles causing stiffness in the region of the neck, with consequent malpositioning of the head on the spine, with the result that reflex pain can often be felt along the whole length of the spinal area.

Minor injuries, often regarded with little concern, often cause lesions in the bone, muscle and ligament tissues. These in turn interfere with the circulation of the blood and congestions can occur with accompanying pain, although in some cases the injury may be somewhat remote from the painful area. Golfers, cricketers and tennis players often become victims to backache through making sudden twists of the body whilst playing, which may not make their effects felt until some time afterwards.

Lumbago and sciatica can be frequently traced to some simple accidental misplacements, and in these cases very little positive result can possibly be expected from the application of lotions or medicines. To successfully treat such conditions the services of a competent physio-therapist are needed, providing the medical officer has confirmed that such a condition is the cause of the pain in the back. Relaxation of contracted tissues and requisite manipulative adjustments will give almost immediate relief, of a lasting nature.

Having appreciated that backache can be attributed to many causes outside the sphere of actual disease, it becomes obvious that a comprehensive search for the cause of the pain is necessary. Doctors and nurses fully appreciate this, but lay people often bear with backache needlessly from causes that can with advantage to them be conquered, by intelligent attention to diet and exercise. When the tone of the human body is lowered by indigestion, constipation and similar disturbances, attention to the nutritive processes will bring relief in many instances. Likewise exercise to develop strength in weakened muscles and stretched membranes is the method to adopt, if protrusion of the abdomen and postural faults are present.

Through lack of sufficient and correctly prescribed exercise the tone of the musculature is lowered, and as may be expected, a sufferer from backache will not look with favour on vigorous movements, but exercise, if too easy and with no definite object in view, tends to exaggerate this weakness, and will not develop the required strength.

Although so sensitive, the back muscles are uncommonly strong. A medical officer once told a patient of his that, "he could not blink his eyes without using his back muscles," which is a slight exaggeration, but it did draw attention to the fact, and to the extent to which the back muscles, affect the body. These muscles

do affect the whole of the body, and in their natural strength maintain the body in its upright position.

The risk of strain is always present with weak muscles, which, if in their normal vigorous strength, would not crack under strain or heavy loads. "Weakness begets weakness" is an accepted saying and is very appropriate when applied to the human body.

A simple but very effective exercise, to invigorate and gradually strengthen the back muscles, consists of lying flat on the floor in a relaxed position, with the hands palm downwards at the sides of the body.

Raise the legs slowly about one foot from the floor, keep them straight with pointed toes but without strain. Hold this position for ten seconds and then raise them another foot, keeping them steady for another ten seconds. Finally raise the legs to as near right angles to the body as possible, maintaining this position for twenty seconds. Lower the legs slowly through the reverse procedure until the feet touch the ground again, pausing for ten seconds at each resting point as for the upward lift. Pressing on the floor by the hands will help in the initial stages, if they are found difficult because of weakness. Throughout the exercise, which should be repeated two or three times at first, increasing to a maximum of four repetitions as strength is gained, the breathing should be normal, to prevent strain on heart and lungs. Relax completely between each repetition of the exercise for a few seconds. In the morning on rising is the best time to perform this exercise which is so beneficial to the legs, abdomen and the back.

All pains and aches are Nature's indications that something is not functioning normally, and therefore backache should always receive far more than a passing thought, for it may develop to a serious condition if neglected.

It is hoped that the foregoing brief outline of the numerous cases that can create backache apart from actual disease, may bring some comfort to sufferers from this persistent and distressing complaint.

The British College of Nurses, Ltd.

Coach Tour of London, May 29th, 1953.

AN INTERESTING COACH TOUR of London, including the Coronation Route, has been arranged by the Council for members to take place on Friday, May 29th, 1953.

Mr. H. L. Bryant Peers has kindly consented to lecture *en route* on the History of the Coronation and London.

The cost of the tour will be 13s. 6d. per head, including tea on return to 19, Queen's Gate.

Members of the College wishing to avail themselves of this unique opportunity are advised to make their applications early, sending a remittance of 13s. 6d., as seats are limited.

The coach will leave 19, Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7, at 1 p.m. returning at approximately 5 p.m.

Lecture on "The Five Elizabeths."

THE SECOND LECTURE has been arranged for Wednesday, March 11th, 1953, at 3 p.m. on "The Five Elizabeths." Fellows, Members and their friends are welcome to attend the Lecture and to tea at the conclusion.

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