

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

HOW WOULD YOU FEED AND WHAT MEANS WOULD YOU TAKE TO RELIEVE A PATIENT WITH AN ACUTE ATTACK OF INDIGESTION?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Ména M. G. Bielby, Cranford.

PRIZE PAPER.

The first point to consider in all cases of acute indigestion is the cause, which must be at once removed. In asthma and several forms of illness indigestion is always lurking in wait for the smallest indiscretion in feeding, and may be averted by care. In all cases of nervous disorders the digestion is more or less impaired, and such patients need unceasing and unobtrusive vigilance regarding the result of their feeding. Many persons have throughout life a stomach the nerves of which are so delicate that any shock or keen anxiety near a meal is inevitably followed by acute indigestion. Yet such people may in fortunate circumstances, leading a quiet regular life, and with a wisely selected diet maintain an enviable degree of health.

Idiosyncrasy plays a prominent part in this disorder, and in all cases of illness it is advisable for the nurse to learn from the friends the special idiosyncrasies of the patient. There are some to whom fish, eggs, milk, strawberries, apples and other wholesome food cause violent indigestion.

With many, congenial society during a meal proves almost a specific against indigestion. Some sleep best immediately after a meal; others cannot sleep at all. But a period of rest should be taken after each meal. Some find interesting, and not too serious reading facilitates digestion. For all a safe, general rule is that whatever tends to promote a happy, contented state of mind during the meal hour and the preceding and following hours, will prove a powerful aid to digestion. Fletcherism should be taught and encouraged.

When there is considerable intestinal flatus it may be necessary to give a turpentine enema, formed of one ounce of turpentine to sixteen ounces of thin starch. When the stomach is distended by flatus a full-tub hot bath often gives immediate relief. A large bath sponge wrung out in water as hot as can be borne, and held to the chest and throat, assists the expulsion of flatus by the mouth. Also the application of dry heat, without weight, to the epigastric region. The feet should be kept quite warm.

To sip very hot water relieves the pain. The doctor may order drugs; bi-surate of magnesia

or bismuth is usually given, but more frequently now drugs are discarded and proper feeding alone is relied on.

Tonics containing iron are a frequent cause of indigestion.

Perhaps there is no article of diet more provocative of indigestion than ordinary white bread, because of the excess of starch which it contains. The safest bread to use is a fine wheatmeal loaf, twenty-four hours old, exposed since taking from the oven to a current of clean, dry air. Scientists affirm that wholemeal contains certain ferments greatly helpful to digestion which are absent from white flour. Experience all tends to prove the truth of this statement.

A few hours' complete rest to the stomach is advisable from the onset of an acute attack of indigestion. Albulactin may be administered in the proportion of 20 grains to 3 tablespoons of boiled water. This is generally borne when nothing else can be tolerated and is especially useful in the case of infants. Sana-togen, or milk with albulactin added, are valuable in the earlier stages of the attack, or the doctor may order peptonized foods. Well-toasted wholemeal bread, eaten dry, the white of an egg beaten up with milk, and lightly poached eggs may be given later. Milk is more digestible if hot, and sipped very slowly.

Sole or whiting baked in a paper bag, finely minced chicken, rice or tapioca puddings, baked apples, spinach, asparagus, cauliflower, lamb and boiled mutton should form the diet for a week or two. Tea and coffee should be given up entirely for the time, and sufferers from indigestion would be wise to use at all times China or one of the special teas containing the minimum of tannin, and cocoa from which the fat has been eliminated.

Half a pint of hot water should be sipped about thirty minutes before each meal, and no liquid taken with or after the meal. Malt or alcohol in any form must be eschewed. All re-cooked meats, potatoes and pastry are indigestible.

It should be borne in mind that a once deranged digestion is always liable to recur or become chronic, and it demands special consideration for years afterwards. Regular physical exercises as taught in Müller's book assist in strengthening the digestive organs. Above all one should secure for such patients freedom from worry and unlimited fresh air.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention, Miss F. Sheppard, Miss Nancy

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