

## Headache and its Causes.

By L. Goddard, S.R.N.

**H**HEADACHES are often due to some condition of the brain, and great importance should be attached to them when continually recurring.

Often it is the first symptom of some organic disease, or to some condition of the brain, and should never be treated lightly.

There are various types of headaches, some so severe that they cause interference with the daily routine of life, and if allowed to remain and not treated may become permanent until its cause is removed.

The seat of the pain may be established in the nerves of the head, face, skull or scalp, or due to inflammation of the membranes of the brain, the latter due to many causes.

The headache is felt in various parts of the skull and convulsions may follow, the inflammation may involve the dura-mater, the pia-arachnoid or the spinal cord; it is often found in children and sometimes in adults after injuries to the head or extension of an inflammatory affection such as tuberculosis in which the child complains of headache for two or three days, followed by vomiting and intense pain in the spinal column, unconsciousness following later.

Wounds of the cerebrum often lead to inflammation of the meninges, the symptoms may be delayed or, if an abscess is forming, it may be weeks before the symptoms appear.

Headache, drowsiness and coma may result from a depressed fracture, the middle meningeal artery may be ruptured, death is not always instantaneous.

Epidemic cerebro-spinal meningitis is characterised by headache and vomiting in the early stages.

Constant dull headaches are often felt by old people when the arteries of the brain are thickening, vomiting occurs, and the head feels to be full and throbbing; there are noises in the ears, which often indicate the approach of an apoplectic seizure.

Another disease found in elderly people is Glaucoma, when the eyeball is over distended with fluid, causing increased tension, resulting often with loss of sight unless prompt attention is given; it is characterised by severe headache and vomiting, the pain, usually at night occurs in one eye and seems to shoot through that side of the head; if not treated the attacks become more severe and frequent and the sight failing, both eyes may become affected.

Pain at the back or top of the head, becoming worse when moving about, and abating when in a recumbent position, is often due to anaemia when the supply of blood to the brain is insufficient.

Pain so severe that its description is often likened to that of a nail being driven into the head, "Clavus" is a form of neuralgia or nervous headache.

Children suffering with headache are often found to be suffering from eye strain and when fitted with suitable glasses, the pain usually felt at the back of the skull vanishes.

Frontal headache in which the pain is made worse on exertion or stooping may be due to high blood pressure,

giddiness, nausea and constipation are often complained of.

Rest and dieting is usually ordered for treatment.

Acute Gastric Catarrh due to over-eating, or eating unsuitable food, or may be due to a chill, often give rise to a severe headache with accompanying pain in the stomach, with constipation followed by diarrhoea; this distressing complaint may be relieved, if not severe, by vomiting.

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