

# Indigestion Can Be Symptom of Serious Disease

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M. D. County Health Officer

Indigestion, often called heartburn, acid stomach, or dyspepsia, is a sign that the digestive system is not functioning properly. Generally, the individual has nobody to blame for its occurrence but himself, but if it persists without reason it may be the symptom of some fundamental organic disturbance.

The complicated process of digestion begins as soon as food enters the mouth and does not end until whatever is

eaten is either assimilated into the system or eliminated as waste matter. Should anything go awry en route, indigestion may occur.

When insufficiently chewed, food enters the stomach in unbroken lumps that are less susceptible to the digestive action of the gastric juices and is, so to speak, off to a bad start right away. Which is the reason that people with bad teeth, or who have none, are so frequently troubled with poor digestion.

FURTHERMORE, as the food

becomes mixed with saliva during the process of chewing digestion of starches begins, and if the process is incomplete the food is naturally not as acceptable to the stomach as when it arrives properly masticated.

Food normally stays in the stomach one to four hours depending on what is consumed and how much. During this time it is subjected to the chemical action of the gastric juices and is ready to enter the duodenum, which is the

first part of the small intestine.

IN THE duodenum, additional chemicals are supplied by the gall bladder, liver and pancreas and these break down the fats, carbohydrates and proteins still further. At this point the food is more or less a fluid broken down chemically into such elements as can be used by the body cells.

During the long and slow passage of food through the small intestine, which is accomplished by successive con-

tractions called peristalsis, all substances useful to the body are absorbed through the intestinal wall into the blood stream. The waste matter that is left passed on the large intestine, from which it is expelled in due time. If anything interferes with more or less regular elimination—constipation for example—digestion may be hindered.

Indigestion is not caused by an acid stomach as some people think. The contents of a normal stomach must be acid if normal digestion is to take

place. Nor can it be blamed on any 'acid condition of the blood' which is normally slightly alkaline and retains its alkalinity virtually unchanged regardless of diet, exercise, prolonged rest, and even disease.

ALTHOUGH the most frequent cause of indigestion is hasty eating, it may be due to other things as well. A scanty breakfast and lunch of the pick-up-and-run variety followed by a rich and hearty dinner places a definite strain

on the digestive apparatus. Heavy smoking and drinking may also upset the normal processes of digestion.

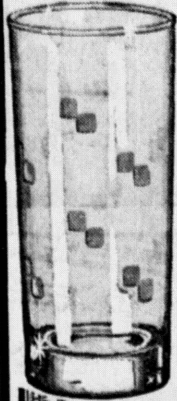
Some people may find that a certain food does not agree with them and, in that case, specialists in digestive disorders say it is best not to eat it. Certainly any food that keeps 'repeating' or is tasted long after it is consumed is not digesting properly.

FATIGUE, haste, anxiety and excitement are among the conditions that inhibit the proper functionings of the stomach secretions. In these

situations, food should be easily digestible in type and eaten sparingly.

The most common organic conditions that may cause indigestion are gall bladder disease, cancer of the stomach, and peptic ulcer. Because of the seriousness of these disorders, individuals bothered with recurrent attacks of indigestion should always consult a physician.

To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life. — Robert Louis Stevenson



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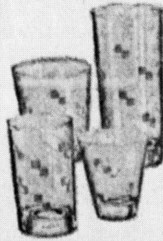
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