

Doctor Talk

By JOHN B. REMBERT, M. D.

The common cold is the most frequent infection in man and the most commonly discussed and "cussed" malady experienced by the human race. The number of individuals infected with colds varies very little, whether he lives in the far north, in the temperate regions, or even in the tropics and the same is true whether you live in a crowded city and daily in close contact with many, many people or live on an isolated farm in the remotest part of the mid-west.

The common cold is prevalent among all age groups, but percentage wise the highest incidence is found among the pre-school child—this is especially true if this pre-school child happens to have an older brother or sister attending school and bringing the infections home. As we grow older the incidence of colds per year decreases until the average adult has approximately two to three colds per year.

Just what we mean by the common cold is hard to define—not being an illness caused by a bacterial invasion of the body and therefore not amenable to various laboratory studies, we must rely upon the symptoms caused by the disease to define its meaning. The common cold is without question caused by a virus or a number of viruses and after invading the body cause changes after a twenty-four to forty-eight hour incubation period. The symptoms first noted are usually headaches, sore throat and malaise, and less frequently chilliness and sneezing. After these initial changes the infection then causes profuse nasal drainage, nasal obstruction, and cough. The entire period of time extending over a period of five to seven days—symptoms extending much beyond this period of time are usually not due to the viral infection, but rather to a secondary involvement by one or more bacteria present. The common practice of many patients rushing to their family doctor for an injection of Penicillin or some other antibiotic is foolish—such drugs having no beneficial effect on viruses; in short, it is a waste of time and antibiotic and must be strongly condemned.

Why we have colds has been the topic of conversation for generations—but now it has been definitely proved that this disease is an infectious process of the body. All the tales you have heard in the past, such as night air, drafts, fatigue, nervous tension, improper diet, overwork, and many others, causing colds have been scientifically studied and none have stood the test—all have been proven to have no influence on colds or the subjects' susceptibility to colds.

In an earlier column the general topic of allergy was discussed, with most individuals connecting allergy with conditions of the respiratory tract and the skin. It is true that the majority of symptoms of allergic disease do involve the nose, throat, or lungs and the skin, but theoretically, any tissue or organ of the body may be the site of involvement. Allergic reactions involving practically every organ and system of the body have been recorded in medical writings—such as the ocular system and the gastrointestinal tract and even the joints of the feet; but the renal and cardiovascular systems have rarely been affected.

The prevalent complaint of headache certainly has an allergic reaction as the causative factor in many cases. The allergic headache is referred to as a nondescript headache often due to an allergic reaction to a food and not necessarily associated with respiratory allergy. The allergic headache is often described by the patient to be a throbbing pain or ache originating over the eyes, then gradually spreading and becoming generalized over the head. Characteristics of the allergic headache is the fact that the pain pattern varies so from patient to patient—in short, the typical feature of the allergic headache is that it is not typical. Ocular allergy is quite common with the typical symptoms of itching and burning of the eyes or swelling and redness of the eyelids. This allergic involvement of the eye may extend beyond the lids and conjunctiva, in some cases involving the cornea and even the deeper structures of the eye. In case of such allergic reactions your doctor must be consulted immediately with proper treatment instituted to prevent possible irreparable damage to the eye.

Allergic reactions involving the stomach can be quite alarming at times, with distress so great as to raise the question of the possibility of a peptic ulcer or some other acute gastric crisis. As the reader can see, allergy can play an important part in the general health of all—and in this day of many chemical sprays and other synthetic materials the possibility of increased allergic reactions is more prevalent than ever before.

Total farm output went up 19 per cent from 1950 to 1959, with no increase in resources used.

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Echo Satellite Gets Wrinkles

America's Echo I Satellite still reflecting communications data despite wrinkles on its aluminum-coated surface which cause heavy signal is now visible during morning hours only.

Although the 100-foot diameter man-made sphere makes six passes daily over a point on the earth, project Echo engineers at Bell Laboratories, Holmdel, say it is visible only three times now during early morning hours. The earth shadow prohibits visibility during evening hours.

The balloon's wrinkles, which are causing a reduction in the intensity of the received signal, result from three factors—(1) Loss of gas pressure inside the sphere (2) Echo's path in and out of the earth's shadow where temperature variation is extreme and (3) effects of air drag.

Bell Laboratories engineers have been recording the level of signals coming from the huge satellite and comparing these with technical theory. This helps to determine the present condition of Echo I.

Engineers say that Echo, zooming across the sky at 16,000 miles per hour, has a life expectancy of about one year. A satellite's life span is determined by solar radiation pressure and air drag.

Echo, launched under the sponsorship of the national aeronautics space administration, tours the earth every 118 minutes. Presently, its closest distance to the earth is 720 miles, while its farthest is 1,250 miles.

Experiments are now being run only once a week at Holmdel. Primarily, they involve receiving carrier signals transmitted from the U. S. Naval Research Laboratory at Stump Neck, Maryland.

Question: How much hay does the average Tar Heel dairy cow eat per day?

Answer: From 2 1/2 to 4 1/2 pounds per 100 pounds of body weight.

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About Your Home

It's true again to pull out all the Christmas decorations and start racking your brain for just the thing "to send Aunt Mary."

I can't help you pick just the thing for Aunt Mary, but I can pass on to you some of the clever ideas for decorating your home.

It seems the modern school has produced its own Christmas decorations. The old stand-by colors, red and green, have been deserted. In their place you will find almost every color combination that is different—shocking pink and soft green, Williamsburg blue and gold. One display room in a large department store featured a living room decorated in white, gold and apple green. It was quite attractive.

Spraying a Christmas tree gold, silver or white is old business now.

Changing the kind of tree can produce startling results. In place of the conventional pine, spruce or cedar, try a limb of a weeping willow stripped of its leaves and painted or gilded. In the proper setting, it can be effective.

Fruit and nuts are being used in Christmas wreaths. They are incorporated in the usual way with strong wire.

People with large picture windows can achieve all kinds of interesting effects with scotch tape and a head full of ideas.

Christmas belongs to all of us but most of all to children. There are many children that Santa may not remember and if you know of any Santa might overlook, do your part of seeing that none is forgotten entirely.

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