

# About Your Health

(By State Board of Health)

## CONSTIPATION

Constipation is a disturbance of normal intestinal function. The usual condition characterized by insufficient elimination of food residue, or abnormal delay in the elimination of the lower intestinal contents about which most patients complain, is properly termed "obstruction" by Doctor Holland of the Cornell Medical College. Doctor Holland has made it a practice for many years to give oral medicine to great numbers of patients he has seen and who complained of constipation. He says that these meals almost invariably went through the twenty-five to thirty feet of intestinal tract on time to the minute, reaching the lower bowel more promptly than railroad train making its schedule. All the valves of the intestinal tract are automatic with the exception of the sphincter of the anus which, although partly automatic, is chiefly voluntary, or under man's control. So, when actual constipation is present it is generally due to a failure in the intestinal tract or to the presence of organic disease. The more common trouble is constipation which most chronic sufferers know as constipation is failure of the rectum to perform its expected function. There is considerable difference of opinion as to what constitutes normal bowel activity. Some medical authorities consider that when evacuation is delayed for more than seventy-two hours that fact constitutes an abnormal and pathological condition. Others of equal right to an opinion would shorten or lengthen the period. The fact is that food habitually retained in the bowels and many other things enter into the equation. The person who consumes large quantities of roughage food will naturally require more frequent evacuation of the residue than one who subsists largely on concentrated food which is almost wholly digested and absorbed without residue. A child whose parents soon after its birth commences the use of suppositories, cathartics, enemas and various other modes of tinkering is apt to grow up into an adult with a well established constipation phobia. Considerable progress in the attitude toward patients complaining of constipation was achieved when physiologists and therapists began to realize that the trouble is not a functional cause affecting chiefly the large bowel, and not a mechanical obstacle on the principle of clogged machinery. That realization put out of business one or two schools of quacks. Another great forward step is now being achieved in the gradual but nevertheless, are elimination of the auto-intoxication idea as a factor of first importance in the causation of constipation. The lower bowel is teeming with germs as a normal condition, hence the conclusion was logically but naturally reached that any interference or delay in so-called normal bowel discharge would result in absorption into the blood in some way some vague poisons which would at once cause characteristic symptoms. It has remained for a few modern physiologists to point out that if such results followed constipation as a general rule the simple evacuation of the bowels by pill or enema would not and could not immediately bring relief as so widely advertised by those who have some remedy to sell for constipation sufferers, because it would be impossible for the blood to so quickly rid itself of the "poisons." Bacteriologists have long ago pointed out that a large portion of bowel discharge is composed of the dead bodies of beneficial germs utilized by nature in the normal, natural process of digestion. This fact has been fully appreciated by the proprietary medicine manufacturer who has also visualized in advertisements that the food mass moves slowly and sluggishly along the entire length of the intestinal tract in a person suffering from constipation; and that poisons causing vertigo, headache and so on are being extracted by the blood at every kink on the route. If such a condition were possible then surely the constipation would kill quicker than pneumonia or typhoid fever. The evils of constipation have been a topic for volumes, not only in proprietary medicine advertisements but by medical writers and health departments. The condition has been described as one of mankind's worst afflictions. Such opinion has been formed on account of a lack of knowledge of physiology or a failure to avail ourselves of such knowledge as already existed. Sound common sense and solid scientific knowledge will sooner or later prevail in this as in all other matters.

Contribute to the loss of sensibility of the lower bowel. In preliminary man the lower bowel is probably as sensitive to irritation as any other part of the digestive tract. The customary polite society, in short the demands of civilization, practiced through the centuries, has more and more tended to make of the lower bowel a distended reservoir. The lower bowel became more and more distended its expelling power is more and more reduced, and the sphincter of the anus is under and its natural spasmodic power harder to overcome. At the same time, as the lower bowel becomes more distended it absorbs more moisture from the contents, resulting in a larger, drier mass remaining. In attempting to overcome this condition a great deal of damage is generally done which results in increased dilation and further loss of sensibility. We refer to the habit of colonic irritations or large enemas as frequently practiced. This habit simply means the constant taking over of the functions of the lower bowel, interrupting the orderly and normal process. The relief experienced is only temporary. The enema habit itself, therefore becomes a cause of the very condition it is sought to overcome. It also results in washing out of the colon much food in the process of fermentation and digesting in that important organ, and in the case of malnourished people aggravates that serious condition. Continued and repeated irritations after time become very harmful. On account of the fact that nature has given man at least partial control over his lower bowel, there is a difference in the peristaltic action of the colon from that of the small intestine. The normal peristaltic movement of the colon occurs only at intervals and the movement is long and sweeping. The lower bowels are much more active during the day than at night. One of the most common causes of constipation is the failure to observe a regular and proper time each day for attention to the bowels. Irregularity which means neglect or postponement of attention at the exact and proper time each day is sure to bring on constipation. It is perhaps the most common cause, certainly the chief one for the beginning of trouble. Lack of accommodation facilities is a cause in many industrial plants, large stores and so on which employ people without sufficient sanitary facilities. Presumably such facilities in private or corporation plants are not kept clean and so neglect of the sanitary facilities is encouraged. In some there is a lack of privacy. However all such defects are rapidly remedied through more modern construction and better inspection service. A multitude of farm women, rural teachers and others who live in rural sections without the benefit of sewage and toilet facilities easily establish the constipation habit because of a lack of comfortable sanitary privies. This is especially true in cold or inclement weather. A sedentary occupation, while not in itself a cause, becomes so often through the contraction of bad habits about physical exercise or exertion. Depressing emotions such as worry, anxiety, or grief may cause temporary constipation, and if not immediately overcome and adjustment made chronic trouble may ensue. One of the simplest causes is starvation. Many internal medicine specialists believe and teach that just about as many people suffer as over-eat. All such people inevitably may expect to suffer from the failure to eat and regularly follow "Habit Time" is the failure to partake each day of a sufficient quantity of properly balanced food. Food that is concentrated, that has little residual matter and which forms all or nearly all of an individual's food requirements for too long a time is likely to result in constipation. This kind of constipation in itself is not harmful; but it means that such person is neglecting to consume the very vital elements as some of the vitamins contained only in certain rough foods. Such procedure is likely to result in a serious "deficiency" disease in addition to the simple constipation. Sometimes obstinate constipation is caused by abuse of the "medicine habit," that is, the use of laxatives and cathartic drugs unless carefully watched by a rood physician not only often cause intractable constipation, but bring on many serious complications, such as hemorrhoids, fissures, mucous, colitis, ulcers and so on. Many people suffer from constipation for the simple reason that they fail to drink enough water. Another cause is hurry. Many people get up in a hurry, rushing and dressing in a hurry. Children are hurried around in order to get them ready for school. Instead of a good breakfast for all the family, a hurried breakfast of fruit and other properly prepared food, leisurely eaten by all, they try for or dilute meal and hurriedly bolt that. And what food? Generally inapid, "quick" catch breakfast foods, with very little food value. A constipation. Such a breakfast is over within from three to five minutes. More

absolute regularity. There should be no aid through continued use of enemas. No previous laxative should be taken. Straining should be avoided once seated on the stool. No special attention should be centered on the function, as that tends to produce contraction instead of relaxation and defeats the purpose of the visit. The toilet should not be made a reading room, however, because attention is distracted with similar results. The only requisite for success to many sufferers in following such a routine is determination and persistent effort.

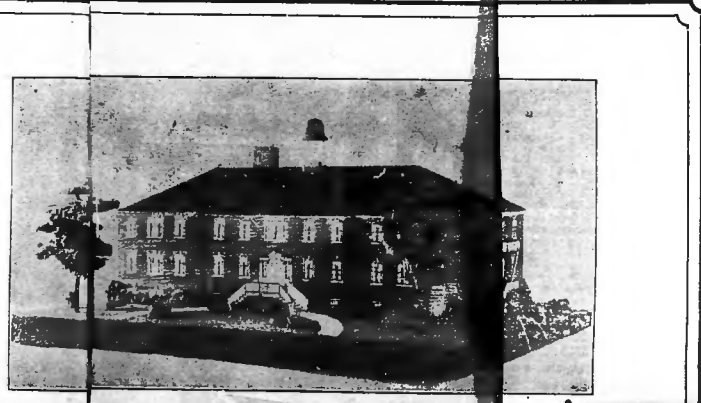
Arthur L. Holland in his book on "Indigestion" agrees with the foregoing but suggests that patients should know that in prolonged constipation with a distended lower bowel and a too extensive absorption of moisture from the fecal mass, it is necessary to consume more of the kinds of food that are "laxative by their moisture retaining properties." Stewed fruits such as apples, peaches and prunes are ideal foods for this purpose because they retain their moisture well down into the intestines as well as carry bulk. They are not constipating foods, except in a negative way. A diet consisting

of such things as chocolate, lean meat, cheese and many other foods are digested almost completely and absorbed without leaving much residue, and the lower bowel fails to respond to such slight mass and so call to the toilet results. Such foods are very essential to maintain normal health and the balance should be maintained by consuming plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits. All the green vegetables such as cabbage, raw and cooked, lettuce, celery, turnips, carrots and many other available for use the year round. Dried fruits such as apples, prunes, peaches, especially when stewed are equally as good.

But plenty of fresh fruit, that plenty of fresh fruit should be eaten when it is possible to obtain it. Preserved fruits such as strawberries, figs and others can be available every day in the year where it is not possible to obtain fresh fruit. The dirty diet also have plenty of cereal an oatmeal whole wheat. A good balance of fat and oils, especially the vegetable oil like cotton seed oil now sold widely for making salad dressing, should be consumed regularly. Milk, Graham bread and whole wheat bread with less of refined wit

tion, would aid greatly in maintaining a better balance. Such food would not only aid in preventing constipation but would help prevent many diseases. For people living in the country or small towns especially in the wheat belt it should be an easy matter to have their wheat and corn ground at nearby mills, thus retaining all the valuable food constituents of the grain. The bread and biscuits should be prepared in the old time way by the use of yeast or by the "sourd process." The sourdough could better be put in at home and milk should be used in the making. Milk and butter in abundance should be used in every home daily as one of the important articles of diet. As before mentioned, sweets in the form of fruit preserves should be plentiful, especially for children, to which should be added frequently simple syrup, honey, and if possible to procure genuine old time molasses. Bran should be used sparingly, and if at all in the form of well cooked muffins. Take plenty of time for each meal but especially breakfast. In the matter of physical exercise nothing can take the place of

(Continued on Page Seven)



The New Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital

## Let's Make This Building OUR New Hospital

IN ADDITION TO THOSE RESIDING OUTSIDE OF ELKIN, RIGHT HERE IN OUR MIDST WILL BE FOUND COUNTLESS NUMBERS WHO HAVE HELPED MATERIALLY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW HUGH CHATHAM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL—THEY HAVE HELPED, NOT SOLELY THROUGH GIFTS OF MONEY, BUT BY THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT IN NUMEROUS WAYS WHICH HAS KEPT UP THE SPIRIT AND EFFORT NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE WORK.

IT IS INDEED A CREDITABLE REFLECTION UPON THOSE WHO HAVE SHOULDERED THE BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY AN STUCK FAITHFULLY TO THE TASK—TO THE FINISH, AND IN OPENING THE DOORS OF THE INSTITUTION THEY MAY FEEL THAT THEIR WORK HAS BEEN WELL DONE AND MERITORIOUS OF PRAISE.

WITHOUT HOSPITAL FACILITIES IN OUR COMMUNITY A KEEN NEED HAS BEEN REALIZED FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, AND NOW THAT ONE IS AVAILABLE, AND UNDER CAPABLE MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP, THE PUBLIC MAY FEEL RELIEVED IN THAT A DREAM HAS COME TRUE.

DEEP GRATITUDE IS FELT FOR THE INTEREST SHOWN BY HUGH G. CHATHAM, HIS SON, THURMOND CHATHAM, THE DUKE ENDOWMENT, REV. L. B. ABERNETHY, AND ALL OTHERS WHO HAVE JOINED TO MAKE THE HOSPITAL WHAT IT IS DESTINED TO BE—A SUCCESS WITHIN ITSELF AND A TRUSTWORTHY REFUGE FOR THE AFFLICTED.

Prescription work our Specialty. We "Check and Double Check 'Em", for Your Safety—and Our Satisfaction

# Turner Drug Co.

W. D. Turner  
Main Street  
Geo. E. Royall  
Phone 64  
Elkin, N. C.