

**Secrets of good health. XII, The white man's burden : effectual exercises /
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SECRETS OF GOOD HEALTH

XII.—THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN.

EFFECTUAL EXERCISES.

By SIR W. ARBUTHNOT
LANE, Bart., C.B.

Constipation, or the habitual overloading of the large bowel, may be regarded as the White Man's Burden. Only the civilised man has to bear this burden. The native, like the baby, empties his lower bowel naturally at least three times a day.

This is partly a matter of habit and partly a matter of diet. In adult life to effect this efficiently necessitates a certain amount of exercise of the right kind.

In athletic training the importance of frequent discharge of the waste products of the body is generally recognised. Men know that the evacuation of the bowel after each meal makes them feel fit, and that it retards and lessens fatigue. Boxers are also aware of the advantages afforded by the normal action of their intestines.

But the ordinary citizen—even when he is not fat elsewhere—too frequently develops a prominence of the lower part of the abdomen which may be very conspicuous. It is a sure sign that something is wrong.

The prominence of the abdomen so constantly seen in civilisation is not only extremely inconvenient to its owner but it is also very ugly and disfiguring. Regular habits of evacuation, such as exist normally in native races, can be readily restored to the civilised man by care and attention to diet and exercise, unless there is some mechanical defect in his intestinal tract. These habits can be acquired by attention after each meal. Some patience and perseverance may be necessary in certain cases, or some dietetic modifications may be required. Sound advice on this point has been given by the New Health Society in its monthly journal, and in many other publications.

BENEFICIAL EXERCISES.

Exercises especially intended to promote the normal functioning of the intestines are related clearly in "The Culture of the Abdomen," a work strongly recommended by the society. The following describes one of the simplest and most effectual exercises. It is one that can be done by the delicate and feeble with ease.

HAMMOCK SWING: Lie on your back on a folded blanket on the floor; bend both knees, soles of feet on the floor,



knees about 12in. apart, heels close to the hips (a pillow under the head prevents rush of blood to head); both hands flat on floor, arms by sides.

Raise hips about 2in. or 3in. from floor, and while body-weight is resting on head and shoulders and feet vigorously swing the body from side to side, keeping shoulders flat on floor and throwing each hip upwards alternately.

Repeat 20 times—10 to each side. Rest. Repeat this cycle five or six times—100 to 120 beats in all with five or six pauses.

The great advantage of this exercise is that, as the abdomen is held loosely, the movement exerts a deep and rolling action on the intestines, stimulating their muscular wall to action, and it is of great utility in remedying constipation. The effect is enhanced if the exercise is performed the first thing in the morning and is preceded by drinking a large quantity of hot water. Breakfast should follow this exercise at an interval of not less than half an hour.

EXERCISES IN THE STREET.

The remedy for undue deposition of fat is constant movement; that is, the retraction and release and the rotation of the abdominal wall periodically during the day.

For example, while a man is standing waiting for an omnibus for a few minutes, instead of wasting his time fretting and fuming he can quite imperceptibly retract and release his abdominal wall in such a way as effectively to stir up the abdominal organs and thus help to prevent sagging of the abdominal wall and stagnation of the contents of his bowel.

It is much more profitable to stimulate to action the abdominal contents by such simple means than to stand idle and impatient.

After a little practice a man can also do a circular or rotary movement of his abdomen by rolling the abdominal wall from right to left or from left to right, without such movements being perceptible to the casual passer-by.

Similarly, when a man is sitting in his office chair he can retract and release his abdominal wall backwards and forwards and rotate it in different directions. If he sits well back in the chair so that its back supports the lower part of his body rather than his shoulders, he will find that automatically he assumes a correct posture—with his abdomen well retracted and not resting forward in a heap.

Again, when a man wakes up in the morning, while lying on his back with a low pillow he can retract and release the abdominal muscles a few times with advantage and so stimulate evacuation of the bowel later. While lying on his back in bed he can also perform the following movements:—Rest the body-weight on the shoulders and heels, tuck in the abdomen, and at the same time contract the muscles of the hips so as to arch the back. The contraction of the muscles of the hips is a very effective means of obtaining abdominal control, as by this measure the hips are held down.

Of course the breath must not be held but exhaled as the abdominal wall is drawn in and inhaled as it is released. These exhalations and inhalations should not be powerful respiratory movements, because the main purpose of this exercise is to activate the abdominal muscles and not to empty and fill the lungs.

These exercises are equally applicable to men and women. Exercises especially useful for women are described in "Sex and Exercise," published by Heinemann, to which the reader is referred for further information.