Patterns of nature. Second series, No. 1, The common brittlestar.

No. 1: The Common Brittlestar

The Common Brittlestar (Ophiothrix fragilis) *may be found in sheltered places under stones near the low-water mark of rocky shores, but is more at home in deeper water down to at least a hundred fathoms. In favoured places on gravelly bottoms at twenty or thirty fathoms in the western English Channel, vast numbers lie on top of one another with arms overlapping and interlaced, so that, as has been shown by underwater cameras, they completely carpet the sea-floor, covering areas measured in square miles rather than in acres. There are often a hundred, sometimes more even than three hundred of them to a square metre.*

Each of the five arms of an adult brittlestar is three to four inches long: as the name suggests, they are easily broken. The arms have an internal skeleton closely resembling a vertebral column and can bend actively in a horizontal plane when, as in our picture, the animals are crawling. They can also be bent up away from the ground to form, by virtue of ciliary mechanisms, an efficient means of feeding on suspended matter, plankton organisms and the like, swept over them by tidal currents.

The colouring is often vivid and is extremely variable: no two individuals ever seem alike.

Colour photograph and notes by Dr. D. P. Wilson, F.R.P.S.

EXCESSIVE alkalisation of the stomach contents can induce a compensatory increase in acid secretion. Even carefully regulated milk-alkali drip has been suspected of aggravating hyperacidity.

In treating hyperacidity and peptic ulcer, therefore, alkalisation is not only unnecessary, but undesirable. It imposes on an already disorganised pattern of secretion unphysiological fluctuations that can prolong the hyperacidic tendency and impede the healing of ulcer.

The optimum therapeutic *p*H range is actually acid—between 3·5 and 4·5—but it permits ulcer healing and does not prejudice the secretory equilibrium of digestive function.

A natural pattern of secretion can be restored to the hyperchlorhydric patient simply by sucking an occasional Prodexin tablet.

Prodexin rapidly buffers excess acid and maintains an equable *p*H for long periods without alkalisation.

PRODEXIN

provides safe and predictable antacid treatment

Each Prodexin tablet contains
Aluminium glycinate (dihydroxy aluminium aminoacetate)...0·9 gramme
Light magnesium carbonate.....0·1 gramme

DOSAGE

To ensure a steady and prolonged flow of medicament to the stomach the tablet should be allowed to dissolve *slowly* in the mouth.

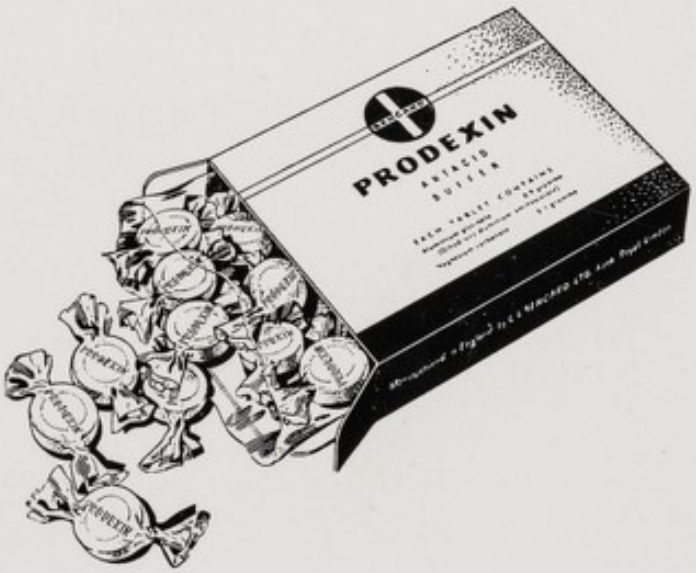
For hyperacidity
One to two tablets as required.

For prevention of hyperacidic attacks
One tablet every hour. If pain recurs regularly it is best to anticipate each attack by sucking a tablet 15 to 30 minutes before pain is expected.

For peptic ulcer
One tablet every hour, or more frequently, depending on the degree of hyperacidity.

PACKAGES

Cartons of 30 individually wrapped tablets and dispensing packs of 240.
Basic N.H.S. cost of 240 tablets: 30s. 4d.



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