

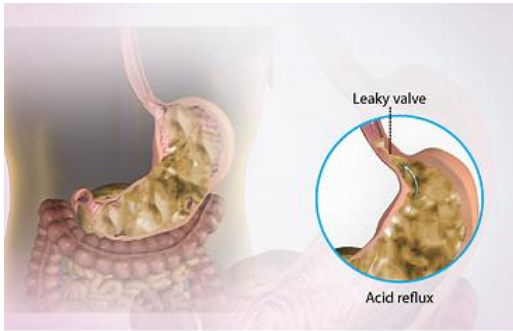
DYSPEPSIA (INDIGESTION).

If there is any one disease that should excite our sympathy and pity for the sufferer more than another, it is dyspepsia. So long as the food is well digested, the patient may be agreeable, cheerful, and hopeful; but let there be but a slight degree of irritation in the stomach of the confirmed dyspeptic, and a low-spirited condition is immediately induced, which may vary from slight dejection and ill-humor to the most extreme melancholy. At times, the patient misconstrues every act of friendship, is irritable with those who desire to help him, while he exaggerates slight ailments into heavy grievances. When suffering from irritation of the stomach, he is no more like himself when well than a kernel of corn is like a potato. He says and does things exactly contrary to what he says and does when well. This makes him appear fickle and unreliable, yet he cannot help it. Surely, such a person should be pitied.

The work of digestion is principally performed by the gastric and pancreatic fluids. Whenever these two fluids are deficient in quantity or in quality, the food cannot be properly digested, and real dyspepsia is the result.

Cause.— Probably there is no one disease, concerning the cause of which there exists so great a uniformity of opinion in the minds of medical men, as dyspepsia. They all agree that errors in diet and errors in exercise are almost the sole cause of this disease. The principal errors in diet that cause this disease are the following: Food taken in too large quantities ; food of improper quality, especially greasy food, and food highly seasoned or mixed with condiments; food taken at irregular times. Or dyspepsia may be caused by food imperfectly masticated, through carelessness or hurry, or because of bad teeth, etc.; or by food taken into the stomach at too short intervals, not allowing the stomach sufficient time to rest. The drinking of too much fluid while eating is also a cause of dyspepsia. In addition to these errors, the want of bodily exercise, sedentary habits, inordinate intellectual exertion, care, anxiety, excessive physical exercise, the frequent use of drugs, especially narcotics, smoking, tobacco-chewing, snuff-taking, and the use of alcoholic drinks, tea, and coffee, are each and all causes of dyspepsia.

Symptoms.— These vary in different individuals. A dyspeptic may manifest any of the following symptoms: pain or uneasiness in the stomach, tenderness and a feeling of all-goneness at the pit of the stomach, as some express themselves,



foul breath, coated tongue, and unpleasant taste in the morning, capricious appetite, which at times refuses food, and at other times is unsatisfied even after a hearty meal, or there may be an entire loss of appetite; sensation of pain or a sense of weight and fullness in the upper portion of the abdomen, the formation of gas in the stomach or

intestines, burning pain in the stomach— heart-burn— cramp in the stomach, frequent eructations of gas or water from the stomach, habitually constipated bowels, chronic diarrhea, or these conditions alternating. There may be nausea and vomiting, palpitation of the heart, irregularity of the pulse, headache, and occasionally dimness of vision. If the stomach is greatly distended with gas, the breathing will be difficult.

Treatment.— Break away from every false habit; eat plain food, cooked in a

simple manner; discard all rich food, grease, fat or oil, eat sparingly, masticate the food thoroughly, eat regularly, and not oftener than three times in twenty-four hours; drink neither tea, coffee, nor other drink with meals; use no alcoholic drinks at any time; take all the exercise in the open air that can be taken short of fatigue; breathe full and free; sleep much, and at regular hours; and always retire early. If the stomach refuses to retain food, it should have rest for twenty-four hours, then begin feeding with a single spoonful of milk. After a half hour, give another spoonful, and so on. After a few hours, increase the amount, or add a little sifted oat, wheat, corn, or barley-meal gruel, and increase the amount no faster than the stomach can retain it. Take the mild baths, such as the dripping-sheet, spray-bath, sponge, sitz, or half-bath, twice a week.

Take the dry-hand-rub every morning, and gently percuss the abdomen and chest with the closed fist every hour through the day for ten minutes at a time. Horseback riding is excellent for those afflicted with this disease. Sun-baths should be taken daily. Hot fomentations over the stomach two hours after eating will aid digestion.

The Hygienic Family Physician: A Complete Guide for the Preservation of Health, and the Treatment of the Sick without Medicine, pg. 329-32 by M. G. Kellogg