

MEDICINE

Tooth, Tonsil Snatching Do Not Cure Arthritis

➤ TONSIL snatching, as it has often been called, has gone out of fashion, but too many persons are still having teeth pulled with the idea of curing their arthritis, it appears from a report by Dr. Richard H. Freyberg, of Cornell University Medical College, in the *Journal of the American Dental Association*.

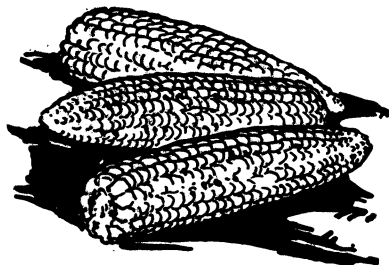
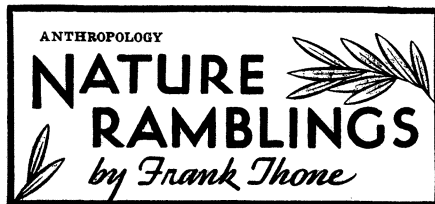
The removal of teeth, or tonsils or other organs, has been done on the theory that the arthritis was caused by infection and that the infection had its focus in a tooth, tonsils, gallbladder or other organ. But there is no proof, Dr. Freyberg states, that rheumatoid arthritis is caused by an infection. Infection in a tooth or elsewhere might act as a trigger setting off the arthritis. Once established, however, the arthritis goes on independently of the infectious trigger, if there is one. So it is doubtful whether removing the focus of infection would cure long-standing arthritis.

A focus of infection should be removed or cleaned up, whether or not a person has arthritis. If he has arthritis, getting rid of the infection should improve his health and perhaps make him better able to fight the arthritis. But he should not expect the arthritis to be cured, and arthritis alone is not enough reason for sacrificing a good tooth or teeth. Dentists recognized this before physicians did.

You may have heard of someone with arthritis who got well after having some or all of his teeth pulled. Doctors have heard and seen such reports, too. Analysis of the reports, Dr. Freyberg says, shows that most of the patients did not have arthritis but had some other disease which would have improved regardless of the treatment.

Besides rheumatoid arthritis, there is another common form known as osteoarthritis or hypertrophic arthritis. This occurs in middle or old age, usually in persons who are otherwise healthy though they may be overweight. A few joints are irregularly swollen and give trouble. One knee may get stiff after sitting for a while and give trouble going up and down stairs. Infection has nothing whatsoever to do with this type of arthritis, so having teeth removed cannot possibly help it, though the teeth may need to be removed because of the condition they are in.

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Fundamental Food

➤ AT THANKSGIVING time we are apt to glorify the turkey and regard as secondary the many other native American contributions to the feast: potatoes both white and sweet, pumpkin and squash, cranberries and blueberries, pecans and peanuts, chocolate and tobacco.

Corn may not appear on the table at all or, if it does, only in the form of cornbread or cornsticks. Yet corn has been the foundation of it all.

The turkey was probably fattened on corn. Certainly his ancestors were, for corn was the only grain possessed by the Indians who first domesticated the turkey and who passed him on to their Spanish conquerors. And for those Indians, whose ruined cities are still among the great wonders of the world, corn was life itself. They ate turkey occasionally; corn they ate every day, as their descendants still do all over Middle and South America.

It is axiomatic among students of human culture that all great civilizations have risen on foundations of grain. Rice-eaters built the vast temples of Angkor Wat and Pnom Penh; men who reared the Pyramids and the Parthenon ate wheaten bread, supplemented with barley and rye; corn was the food of the Mayas, the Aztecs and the subjects of the Incas. And when Europeans settled in this hemisphere, bringing with them their own work and food animals, they learned to eat corn and to feed it to their stock. It has become so characteristically American that we tend to forget that it was American before we ourselves were.

There is good evidence that corn supported the lost Indian cultures within the present United States boundaries. Less spectacular than those of Mexico

and Peru, and less highly organized, the civilization of the ancient moundbuilding peoples was nevertheless relatively well advanced. To erect such imposing monuments of piled earth, with elaborate burial crypts under many of them, required the continuous and coordinated labor of many hundreds of persons. Population densities of even that level cannot be maintained on a hunting-and-fishing basis alone. So it is no surprise to find traces of corn cultivation in the moundbuilder cultures, even as the later Indians in our country were found to be cultivators of corn as well as hunters of turkey and deer.

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Colds Kill More Babies Than Suffocation Does

➤ UNSUSPECTED colds or other nose and throat infections are probably the cause of many of the 1,600 infant deaths a year which are now attributed to accidental suffocation by blankets, pillows or other mechanical means, Drs. Jacob Werne and Irene Garrow, of New York City's chief medical examiner's office, charge.

Investigating 200 cases of infants allegedly suffocated in crib or carriage, they found by microscopic study that two-thirds of the babies had acute inflammation in the nose and throat in association with other significant damage to organs. Such signs are conspicuously absent in healthy infants dying of proved violence.

More infant lives may be saved, the doctors declare, by teaching parents to recognize the early signs of colds, influenza and the like in babies and to keep the babies away from persons who have colds or similar infections.

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TEENAGE GIFTS

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