

PUBLIC HEALTH

Good Stomachs For War Assured By Induction Boards

Army Examinations Are Four to Five Times as Good For Revealing Ulcers as Life Insurance Examinations

STOMACH ULCERS which have been a cause of much disability in the British and Canadian armies are being effectively ruled out of the American army by present recruiting policies, according to figures revealed by Col. John L. Kantor, U. S. Army Medical Reserve, at the meeting of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City.

Examinations by the army induction boards are four to five times as efficient in revealing ulcers as the life insurance examinations of civil life, Col. Kantor declared. Local induction boards rejected men with ulcers at the rate of 4.4 per thousand and army induction boards have rejected them at the rate of 5.5 per thousand. Life insurance statistics give the rate of ulcers found in men under 35 years as only one per thousand.

Stomach ulcers rank high as a cause of disability for military service and are increasingly common in both military and civil life, Col. Kantor declared. They lead all other digestive diseases as a cause of discharge from the regular army.

Vaccinations against cholera, given to all soldiers likely to be sent to parts of the world where cholera exists, anti-typhoid vaccinations and careful attention to sanitation and good food are measures taken by the army to protect the American soldier from digestive diseases. In peace, these diseases ranked third as a cause of admission to sick report, third as cause of lost time and discharge for disability and fourth as cause of death.

World War I and Veterans Administration records "suggest" that of every nine soldiers with digestive disease in active service, three or four are likely to suffer permanent disability.

Facilities for treating the soldier who does get a digestive ailment are good, it appears from Col. Kantor's description of the number of stomach specialists in the army. Latest methods of diagnosing and treating stomach ailments, including the gastroscope which doctors

in civil life have only been using for a few years to look inside a patient's stomach, are available in army hospitals.

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Avoid Hurried Eating

A GREATER risk of getting stomach ulcer comes from eating hurriedly, overeating, eating when tired, worried or angry than from eating any particular kind of food, Dr. Russell S. Boles, of Philadelphia, declared.

Only persons of a certain type will

"produce an ulcer," Dr. Boles stated. This type is characterized by instability of the autonomic nervous system, which acts without conscious control. In some of these people, "outward calm may hide inner chaos," he pointed out.

"As a rule these individuals have effectual energetic personalities and they live in a constant state of excitement, anxiety, fear or some other emotional ferment."

Dr. Boles' advice to ulcer-susceptible persons: Feel free to eat what agrees with you, but avoid eating it when tired or in a bad state of mind; generally speaking, alcohol and other irritants to the stomach should be used, if at all, in great moderation; tobacco should be restricted to not more than six cigarettes daily, and these should not be smoked on an empty stomach; rest after eating when possible and don't subject the nervous system to the effects of too great application of the mind and too little manual activity.

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NUTRITION—ETHNOLOGY

Eating Dirt May Be Sign of Diet Deficiency

DIRT EATING, or clay eating, may be a sign of diet deficiency, not mental disease, it is revealed by a survey of school children in Oktibbeha County, Mississippi.

Dirt eaters are particular about what sort of soil they eat, and the evidence suggests that dirt eating may be due to a lack of iron in their diets.

Eating dirt is a fairly common practice in some parts of this country, particularly among Southern Negroes, according to the survey conducted by Drs. Dorothy Dickins and Robert N. Ford of Mississippi State College (*American Sociological Review*, February). Every adult Negro interviewed, as well as many white persons, had heard of the custom and some admitted practicing it.

"Reasons given for eating dirt," the investigators said, "were: it is good for you; tastes good, rather sour, like a lemon; helps women who are pregnant; and tastes especially good if smoked."

"The notion that people crave dirt is common. They get to the place where they feel they must have clay to eat. Clay from certain banks is termed especially good."

"One hears, too, that dirt is carried

long distances to people who can no longer get it themselves. Some claim that Negroes in the South send bags of dirt to Negroes who have migrated north. Negroes who now live in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta are said to ask Negroes who live in the hills of Mississippi to send a bag of good dirt. Perhaps they acquired the habit when they, too, lived in the hills where clay was abundant. The dirt in the Delta is no good for eating."

The survey was undertaken as a result of disclosures at a meeting of the Food Habits Committee of the National Research Council.

The school children were given lists of iron-rich foods in which the words "clay" and "dirt" were included with mustard greens, molasses, beans, and so on, and asked to tell which foods they had eaten that day. At least a fourth were found to be dirt eaters. While dirt-eating was more frequent among those who consumed fewer iron-rich foods, the survey concludes that more information is necessary concerning quantities of these foods eaten, quantities of dirt eaten, and also the body's capacity to utilize iron.

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