

PUBLIC SAFETY

Larger Air Raid Pantry

► SURVIVORS OF an atomic or hydrogen bomb attack in the United States may have to spend a week underground.

This new estimate was suggested in a new publication, *Facts About Fallout*, issued by the Federal Civil Defense Administration. One of the recommendations for survival calls for a seven-day supply of B-rations, emergency food and water for storage in home shelters.

Previously, civil defense officials had recommended only a three-day post-bomb survival pantry.

Now, however, they feel that a larger bomb would contaminate a larger area. In this case, it would take a longer time for decontamination crews and evaluation parties to survey the area to determine whether it is safe enough for persons to come above ground.

Seven days is almost a maximum estimate, civil defense officials told SCIENCE SERVICE, for the time needed to be spent underground might be considerably less.

Not every minute of the danger time after an explosion will have to be spent in the shelter, they point out. Survivors can come up for air for periods of ten minutes or more for a total of an hour or two a day. It is even hoped that they will be able to clear some debris or wash some of their

house during their above-ground time. The pamphlet warns persons not to become discouraged nor panicky.

Fallout, it reports, is nothing more than particles of matter in the air, made radioactive by A-bomb or H-bomb explosions. Radioactivity is nothing new and the whole world is radioactive. Normal amounts of radioactivity are not dangerous. It is only when radioactivity is present in highly concentrated amounts, such as created by A-bomb and H-bomb explosions that it becomes dangerous.

"If you are exposed to it long enough, it will hurt you! It may even kill you!"

You cannot hear, taste, touch and often cannot even see radioactivity fallout.

The FCDA suggests four rules for survival:

1. Prepare a shelter area where you live in the city or country.
2. Stock your shelter with a 7-day supply of water and food.
3. Get a radio and listen to the Civil Defense Conelrad frequencies for news and instructions.
4. If you think you have been in a serious fallout area, remove and wash your outer clothing. Wash the exposed parts of your body.

Science News Letter, June 18, 1955

MEDICINE

Plant Drug for Heart Ill

► HOPE THAT a new food supplement will prove a remedy for patients with heart trouble and some kinds of artery disease and high blood pressure is seen in studies reported to the American Medical Association in Atlantic City, N. J. The supplement is already taking the place of the rigid fat-free diet many patients have to follow.

The food supplement is a plant chemical called sitosterol. It corresponds in plants to the fatty chemical, cholesterol, in animals. It can prevent absorption of cholesterol because it combines with cholesterol to form a mixed crystal. This crystal is not absorbed by the body. Consequently patients can eat a normal diet while taking sitosterol without danger of having cholesterol deposited in plaques that clog their arteries.

The dangerous cholesterol plaques in arteries feature the serious ailment, atherosclerosis, which the layman calls hardening of the arteries.

Sitosterol prevents this condition in rabbits, chickens and dogs fed a high cholesterol diet. In humans it reduces the cholesterol in the blood 15% in about eight of 10 patients.

The chemical is a tasteless white powder given in a thick fluid called a suspension. It can be flavored to make it palatable. Pa-

tients take a tablespoonful with each meal.

Sitosterol is found in all plant foods, from vegetable oils to cereal grains such as wheat and corn. Normally we get a little of it in our daily food. But to keep cholesterol from being absorbed from the digestive tract, sitosterol is given in 10 to 12 times the amount daily that would be eaten in food.

Long-time studies are now under way to see whether, besides preventing cholesterol absorption, sitosterol will also remove the accumulations of it in artery walls in patients who have angina pectoris and blood vessel disease.

Sitosterol is not yet on the market, partly because it has not yet had enough testing on patients and partly because of the supply problem. It has been given to enough people to show that it is safe and has no side effects. And the supply problem is about to be solved since the discovery that it can be extracted from the residue from wood used to make kraft paper sacks.

The work with it was reported by Dr. R. E. Shipley of Eli Lilly and Company, Indianapolis.

Science News Letter, June 18, 1955

Changes in tin and lead content can be used to date illegible, ancient Greek coins.

• RADIO

Saturday, June 25, 1955, 5:00-5:15 p.m. EDT
"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. Wallace R. Brode, associate director, National Bureau of Standards, will discuss "Uncle Sam's House of Science."

MEDICINE

Women, Babies Should Get Polio Vaccination

► VACCINATE ALL child-bearing women against polio. Vaccinate all babies in their first year of life. That would be the ideal way to prevent infantile paralysis in everyone in the future, Dr. Jonas E. Salk of the University of Pittsburgh declared at the meeting of the American Medical Association in Atlantic City, N. J.

Children who have had their first shot of polio vaccine but have had to wait or are still waiting for the second shot have protection that will last up to 30 months.

This reassurance was also given by Dr. Salk on the basis of his own studies in the past few years.

Dr. Salk sees no danger of paralytic polio developing in children who have had the first vaccine shot and who get the second shot during the epidemic season in mid- or late summer. The reason is that there is no polio virus in their blood after the first shot.

Danger of paralytic polio developing from any kind of shots when given during the polio season depends on the presence of polio virus in the child's blood. Such virus may be present in the blood even when no symptoms of disease exist.

Science News Letter, June 18, 1955

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