

OPHTHALMOLOGY

Watching TV and Movies Is Good Eye Exercise

► WATCHING TELEVISION and motion pictures is good exercise for the eyes, a University of Colorado eye doctor told the clinical meeting of the American Medical Association in Denver.

The idea that a person can "save" his eyes by not using them is a great misconception, Dr. Morris Kaplan said, adding that eyes are like hands, legs and brain in that lack of use may do much greater harm than use.

"Of all diseases that the human eye is heir to, none can conceivably be made worse by using the eyes," he said.

He urges his patients to watch television as much as possible and recommends frequent movies to all his postoperative cases.

Reading in the dark or while lying down, or holding reading material close to the eyes may cause discomfort but will not harm the eyes, the ophthalmologist said. Eyestrain is the sum of discomforts resulting from overuse of the eyes or defects in focusing powers, but it does not damage the organs of sight.

Nearly everyone beyond the age of 50 needs glasses to focus on objects held within arm's length. This is inescapable regardless of diet, physical strength or any kind of use or alleged abuse of the eyes, Dr. Kaplan explained.

However, glasses have no curative powers on the eyes, and removing them, no matter how strong they may be, does no harm to the eyes, he said. They do make the vision sharper and frequently improve the comfort of the person wearing them by eliminating headaches.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Malaria Can Be Stamped Out by 1967, at a Price

► MALARIA can be stamped out by 1967 in the Western Hemisphere. However, the price tag for the eradication program is nearly \$200,000,000, experts at the Pan American Health Organization, Washington, D.C., said.

Many inroads have been made in reducing the number of malaria cases since 1954, when PAHO's malaria control program began. But a \$200,000,000 crash program could eradicate the problem entirely from the Western Hemisphere countries, PAHO officials declared.

The cost would be distributed among the 21 Pan American countries and the United Kingdom, Netherlands and France, which own territories in the Western Hemisphere.

Already, the dreaded malaria has been stamped out in Chile and Barbados. Mexico and Venezuela reported 80% success in their countries.

PAHO malaria experts have pinpointed areas in various Pan-American countries where the malaria mosquito is especially abundant. By sending teams into the regions to spray the swamps and other breed-

ing areas, the malaria mosquito can be eradicated.

The trouble spot areas total 5,125,000 square miles, with a population of more than 88,000,000 persons. The cost of the seven-year program is about two dollars per person, the PAHO reported.

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ECONOMICS

In International Listing OEEC Becomes OECD

► IN THE ALPHABET of international organizations OEEC has now become OECD.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development came into existence this fall with 20 nations as members, including the United States, succeeding the Organization for European Economic Cooperation.

OECD will continue to give attention to scientific and technical personnel which has been one of the functions of OEEC. It is expected that industrialized free nations in addition to the United States will assume a larger role in such aid to the developing nations throughout the world as a result of the new organization.

The OECD will create a new strong economic tie between Western Europe and North America, and it is expected to mark a new era in Free World economic cooperation and progress. One of its principal objectives is expansion of world trade, and the achievement of the highest sustainable economic growth in employment and a rising standard of living in the member countries.

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HOME ECONOMICS

Bacteria in Frozen Foods May Cause "Off-Flavors"

► FOOD HELD above freezing temperatures before being frozen for storage may have an off-taste because of bacterial action. Although freezing usually stops the bacteria from growing, it does not kill all types of organisms.

Chicken gravy samples to which five common bacteria sometimes found in frozen foods were added were judged inferior in taste to unfrozen samples with no bacteria. The flavor change occurred in the four to six hours between the time the bacteria were added and the time the product was frozen.

In one test, researchers filtered the gravy to remove the bacterial cells before the gravy was tested. The off-flavor was still there, indicating that it was a result of bacterial action rather than the bacteria themselves.

These results point to the need for careful sanitation before freezing, use of high quality products in frozen foods and prompt freezing after the foods are prepared, University of Wisconsin home economists, Virginia Felstehausen and Dorothy Strong, said.

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IN SCIEN

PSYCHOLOGY

Suicide Research Shows Facts Versus Fables

► MANY POPULAR BELIEFS about suicide have been shattered as a result of research in a suicide prevention center.

For example, the often-heard statement that people who talk about suicide do not take their lives is a fable. Eight out of ten persons who kill themselves have given definite warnings.

Other facts versus fables:

Instead of being fully intent on dying, most suicidal persons "gamble with death," leaving it to others to save them.

The wish to kill themselves lasts for a limited time, and not forever.

However, the suicidal risk lasts about three months beyond the crisis. "Improvement" may give the suicidal individual strength to put his morbid feelings into effect.

Suicide is very "democratic" and does not occur more frequently among the rich or the poor.

Suicide does not run in families.

The suicidal person is not necessarily mentally ill even if he is extremely unhappy.

These and other facts, including how to help suicidal persons, are in a new booklet entitled "Some Facts About Suicide" by Drs. Edwin S. Shneidman and Norman L. Farberow, co-directors of the Suicide Prevention Center of Los Angeles, Calif., assisted by Calista V. Leonard, a staff member.

The center is supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, U. S. Public Health Service, Bethesda, Md. The booklet is sold by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., at 10¢ each or 100 for \$5.

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MEDICINE

Holding Breath Improves Heart X-Ray Studies

► X-RAYS of the blood vessels supplying the heart are improved by holding the breath.

Injecting an opaque dye into the coronary blood supply can be done more evenly and provide a clearer picture, even of tiny capillaries, if the air pressure in the lungs is increased slightly, a Swedish physician reported at the 47th annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America in Chicago. The opaque dye shows up defects or blockage of the heart.

Dr. Bjorn Nordenstrom and his associates at the Karolinska Sjukhuset, Stockholm, where he is director of the department of thoracic radiology, reported the finding.

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CE FIELDS

MEDICINE

Cancer in Iceland Linked to Smoked Fish

➤ STOMACH CANCER in Iceland has been linked to smoked fish.

The high rate of consumption of smoked salmon and trout in that country, where there is a high rate of stomach cancer, appears to be related to the malignancy, Dr. Niels Dungal, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 178:789, 1961.

A study of 2,655 fatal cases of stomach cancer in Iceland from 1921 to 1959 showed the geographical distribution. Dr. Dungal found that 45% of the men of a certain village had died of stomach cancer in the last 30 years, as compared to only 9.5% of the women.

The farmers in that community go on expeditions for weeks every spring to catch birds on an offshore island. They not only have consumed quantities of smoked fish but they have prepared up to 100,000 smoked bird breasts a year. The people live around a trout lake far from all markets, and smoke most of the trout, so that the consumption of smoked food is unusually high, especially among the men.

However, another cause of stomach cancer was proposed to explain deaths from that disease in the Westman Islands of Iceland. The islands have no public water supply and no artesian wells, and the inhabitants are forced to drink rain water that falls from sooty house roofs into barrels.

"This is the most likely cause of the high incidence of stomach cancer in the Westman Islands," Dr. Dungal said.

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MEDICINE

Bowel Cancer Reduced By Radiation Treatment

➤ CANCER OF THE LOWER BOWEL can be reduced in size through radiation treatment, two Harvard Medical School radiologists told the Radiological Society of North America in Chicago.

Drs. C. C. Wang and M. D. Schulz reported on a study of 111 persons treated by radiation at the Massachusetts General Hospital over a 20-year period. In the majority of cases, either the tumor was made smaller, or pain was relieved, or both.

Although surgery is the preferred method of handling so-called "curable" cancers of the rectum and colon areas, some of these cancers are inoperable or cannot be entirely removed.

Of the 111 persons with lower bowel cancer treated by radiation, 86 showed a recurrence of the bowel cancer after oper-

ation. Another 16 had inoperable cancers, and nine had residual cancer after unsuccessful surgery. The majority were over 50 years of age.

Only 13 of 82 persons followed up after radiation treatment did not benefit. The patients were treated with radiation of more than 1,000 roentgens a week for a maximum dose of 3,500 to 5,000 roentgens over four to five weeks.

From the follow-up group of 82, six showed no signs of cancer five years after treatment. All but one of the six were men under 40, however.

Some 58 of the original group of 111 were judged to have had potentially curable non-spreading cancer. There seemed to be a direct relationship between the success of the treatment and the total amount of radiation given, the doctors said.

They concluded that "under certain circumstances, some of the tumors and their local spread are quite amenable to vigorous radiation therapy."

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MEDICINE

Too Much Coffee Drunk But Coffee "Breaks" O.K.

➤ THERE IS no justifiable medical reason to do away with coffee breaks in industry, even though Americans are drinking coffee at a rate that is "bound to produce some illness," the 15th annual clinical meeting of the American Medical Association was told in Denver, Colo.

Formal coffee breaks in industry account for only about seven or eight percent of the 100 billion cups of coffee consumed each year in this country, Dr. E. C. Ridgway of Cody, Wyo., said. Some housewives, in contrast, indulge in one long coffee break that lasts from breakfast until late afternoon.

"This may make them pretty hard to live with, and pretty intolerant and irritable with small children," the physician pointed out.

A cup of coffee contains up to 150 milligrams of caffeine, he said, and 15 cups of average strength would provide 500 milligrams of caffeine. This is therapeutically considered "a good stiff dose" and is probably twice the dosage a doctor would prescribe for a normal person.

Caffeine poisoning is very rare, and caffeine allergy is infrequent, but caffeine intolerance can be commonly seen.

Symptoms are gastro-intestinal, cardiovascular or nervous, such as insomnia or irritability. There may also be withdrawal symptoms, such as morning headache and fatigue when a person goes without coffee.

Individuals vary in their ability to tolerate caffeine, Dr. Ridgway said, explaining that one person can completely tolerate 15 cups a day while another may have marked symptoms with three or four cups.

Decaffeinated coffee contains one-sixth to one-eighth as much caffeine as regular coffee, and Dr. Ridgway suggested using the decaffeinated coffee or fruit juices or milk as a substitute beverage.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Falling-Out Baby Teeth Provide Clues on Fallout

➤ BABY TEETH are being analyzed to provide a reliable yardstick for monitoring the strontium-90 uptake resulting from nuclear test fallout in children.

Studies have shown that the strontium-90 content in both bones and teeth of children is virtually identical. It appears that the measure of strontium-90 levels in baby teeth is a good indicator of the concentration in the entire skeleton, Dr. Louise Reiss, internist and director of the baby tooth survey of the Greater St. Louis Citizens' Committee for Nuclear Information, reported in *Science*, 134:1669, 1961.

Dr. Reiss studied the strontium-90 content of teeth from more than 1,000 children born in the St. Louis area during the years 1951-1954. Studies revealed a progressively increasing strontium-90 concentration resulting from fallout of earlier U. S., British and Russian nuclear testing. A comparison of the strontium-90 content of teeth and bones of a number of stillborn babies was also made.

Methods developed by the survey, done almost entirely by volunteers, can be used to gain valuable information about strontium-90 absorption by children throughout the world, Dr. Reiss suggests.

Strontium-90, a known cause of leukemia and bone cancer, is often called "the bone-seeker" because, like calcium, it tends to settle in the bone. Infants and children whose bone calcium formation is not complete are most susceptible to strontium-90.

The survey in St. Louis, the first of its kind in the world, began in December, 1958.

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TECHNOLOGY

Rubber Bands on Lobster Claws Used in Shipping

➤ LOBSTERS shipped in Canada will have their large crusher claws secured by rubber bands if the Canadian fishermen follow the recommendations of two of their scientists.

Researches by Drs. D. G. Wilder and D. W. McLeese of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada, St. Andrews, N.B., have shown the advantages of the banding method of inactivating the claws of live lobsters to protect them from injuring each other during live storage and shipping. Advantages outweigh the slowness of this technique. They suggest that a simple efficient method to apply the bands more quickly can be devised.

This method is preferred to plugging, now widely used in North America, in which a wooden or plastic plug is inserted into the thumb joint of the claw. They state that the plug injures the tissue, eventually making it dark and unpalatable and also causes these lobsters to be more susceptible to a lobster blood disease. The use of a third method, tendon-cutting, in which mortality was highest, was not advised.

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