

• New Ideas and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **AUTOMATIC TIMER ALARM** that attaches to a key chain is useful to the office worker or researcher, as well as the busy mother, for monitoring periods from two minutes to an hour. The automatic timer can be carried in the pocket or purse. It sounds a soft buzz at the preset time for meeting appointments, taking pills, picking up children or any other duty.

• Science News Letter, 84:64 July 27, 1963

⚙️ **MATHEMATICAL PLAQUES** help young children learn basic number concepts more easily. The set consists of 30 colored plastic plaques easily handled by small hands. White plaques are numbered 0 to 9 and pink +0 to +9, both sets having corresponding black dots for each number. Green plaques are designated -0 to -9. The plaques interlock and are so made that the sums or differences are indicated by the total number of dots exposed.

• Science News Letter, 84:64 July 27, 1963

⚙️ **BRUSH CLEANER** not only cleans paint brushes between color changes, but restores old, paint-hardened brushes and removes gloss from painted and varnished surfaces, softening hard paint in brushes and rollers in five to ten minutes of soaking. By wiping a painted surface with a cloth or sponge soaked with the cleaner, the surface can be refinished without sandpapering.

• Science News Letter, 84:64 July 27, 1963



⚙️ **ELECTRIC HAIR CURLER** allows hair to be set quickly at the home dressing table. The compact unit can be plugged into the household current and consists of a set of insert tubes that fit in the device for heating and a supply of cordless rollers. The electric unit, thermostatically controlled, heats the tubes for insertion in the rollers previously arranged on the head.

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⚙️ **BATTERY CHARGER**, useful to hobbyists and engineers, charges any battery from the smallest subminiature up to heavy-duty 25-volt batteries. Its continuously adjustable charging rate control allows regulation to factory-recommended charging rates. The device is provided with a charging rate indicator, a self-resetting circuit breaker and color coded output cord.

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⚙️ **ROOFING-FLOORING MATERIAL** of urethane elastomer can be sprayed on in any thickness over all types of wood, metal, asphalt and concrete surfaces. Softly resilient underfoot, it has excellent sound-deadening properties, high tensile strength and resistance to abrasion, tear and oxidation. It comes in a variety of colors and provides a seamless surface that bridges cracks in concrete.

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⚙️ **PERSONAL ELECTRIC FAN** is only 2½ x 5 x 5 inches in size and can be placed on the desk or mounted on the wall. Designed with a cylindrical-type head having 18 blades, the noiseless portable fan, imported from Switzerland, has great cooling power and uniform air movement. It operates on standard household outlet and is adjustable in any direction and for either a gentle or strong breeze.

• Science News Letter, 84:64 July 27, 1963

• Doctors Are Reading •

Go to Dentist for Tartar Removal

► **TARTAR DEPOSITS** on teeth accumulate more rapidly in some persons than others, a Chicago dentist told a New York doctor in the questions and answers section of the Journal of the American Medical Association, 185:154, 1963.

"Neither special diet nor medication has been shown clinically to lower the rate of calcium formation," Dr. Richard W. Tietze said. Home care should include frequent brushing with a mildly abrasive dentifrice, but removal of the desposits by the dentist is the most satisfactory way to prevent diseased gums.

Fatigue Drug Effectiveness Questioned

Tests of a drug called Spartase, which is being used to treat fatigue, showed no benefit on either the muscular performance or well-being of a group of athletes, a report in JAMA, 185:129, 1963, states. In fact, two of them felt better when they took dummy pills.

Previous investigations had shown that rats, exhausted from prolonged, forced swimming, were able to swim for longer periods and recover more rapidly from exhaustion when given the combination of potassium and magnesium salts of aspartic acid, which are ingredients of Spartase.

One French researcher, C. Vial, in uncontrolled studies of athletes, had concluded that "aspartates combat neuromuscular fatigue, primarily affecting recovery after effort."

In the present study, which was at Johns Hopkins University, 26 inmates of the Maryland State Penitentiary who were experi-

enced weight-lifters and regularly engaged in athletic activity volunteered. Since placebos identical in appearance to Spartase were given to half of the volunteers, none knew what he was taking.

The men took four Spartase tablets daily, or an equal number of placebos. No significant effects were seen, but two estimates of physical state were "significantly higher on the placebos."

Drs. Norma Fallis, W. R. Wilson, Leon L. Tetreault and Louis Lasagna reported the study. They conceded that other kinds of fatigue might benefit from Spartase, but said their study supported the position of the AMA's Council on Drugs, which recently questioned its efficacy. Spartase is produced by Wyeth Laboratories.

Leg Swelling Causes

Leg swelling in men may be caused by cancer of the prostate gland, three Mayo Clinic physicians reported in JAMA, 185:80, 1963. Infections and cancer were the most common causes of leg swelling due to excessive lymph fluid when a lymphatic abnormality was not responsible.

Primary lymphedema, due to abnormality of the lymphatic system, affects women predominantly and almost always begins before the age of 40, Drs. Richard D. Smith, John A. Spittell Jr. and Alexander Schirger said. But secondary lymphedema, leg swelling due to some cause outside the lymphatic process, affects men and women equally and usually begins after they are 40.

• Science News Letter, 84:64 July 27, 1963