

PUBLIC HEALTH

Prescribed Vacations

You May Get Ten Days at the Seashore or a Month In the Mountains—Just What You Need to Restore Health

By JANE STAFFORD

RX: 10 days at the shore—to be taken as directed.

Here's a new idea for that summer vacation you are planning: Have it made to order for you, according to your doctor's prescription.

That is only a sample prescription, however. You may get one ordering three weeks on a mountaintop. The important thing is that if you consult your physician about it, you will get a vacation tailored to your own individual requirements. The result will be good for your health and your spirits too.

The suggestion for made-to-order vacations comes from Dr. Charles I. Singer, of Long Beach, N. Y. In a recent *Journal of the American Medical Association*, he pointed out the benefits to be gained from such vacations.

More than 35,000,000 Americans take part every year in what Dr. Singer calls vacational migrations. They spend on these migrations the "incredible but carefully estimated sum of \$5,000,000,000 yearly," he says.

You know what part of that five-billion-dollar vacation bill you pay. Do you get your money's worth in health and in replenishment of physical and mental resources? Or do you come home tired out, blistered from sunburn, and feeling let-down and disappointed by the vacation you had looked forward to for months?

Governed By Whim

America's vacational migrations, Dr. Singer says, lack "a conscious, well-recognized purpose and are governed mostly by vogues, whims and fads born out of hearsay evidence.

"The average American," he points out, "is not chiefly concerned with improving his state of health during his vacation. His conscious motives are wanderlust and the craving for a good time. He fulfills his desires in this respect but neglects his chance to improve his physical condition at the same time.

"It is different with the European . . . It is traditional with the European to take his vacation regularly and to consider it a very important constructive period of life. Whether he feels ill or

not, he consults his physician about the site of his vacation . . .

"The American public does not know that for the healthy individual a medical vacational guidance is advisable and that in the sick it is imperative. People should be taught to know this."

Not Your Fault

It is probably not entirely your fault if you do not get the greatest health benefits from your vacation. Dr. Singer goes on to chide American physicians a bit for not giving more consideration to vacation prescriptions. For one thing, the basic facts about the effects of climate on various types of individuals and in various ailments are not yet established. American health resorts have not been developed as they might have been. One thing seems sure, however. There is no need to cross the ocean to get the health benefits of either spas or climate.

"Nature did not bestow all its natural resources on Europe," Dr. Singer declares. "On the contrary, Europe has no

Florida, no California, Nevada or Colorado and nothing like Yellowstone Park, with its mineral thermal springs and mud volcanoes."

Yellowstone Park, it should be noted, will for many reasons remain a vacation spot minus health resort features, but there are plenty of other places in the United States where you can drink the medicinal waters and take hot spring and mud baths, if your health requires them. Arkansas and Virginia, for example, have their hot springs, and New York's Saratoga has mineral waters as well as horse races.

Climate a Factor

Change of climate is the instinctive factor that induces 35,000,000 Americans to spend five billion dollars on annual vacation migrations, Dr. Singer declares. That being the case, it is interesting to consider exactly what effect climate or change of climate has on the body and thus on the health.

Broadly, climate can be divided into two groups, sedative and stimulating. The sedative climate, of course, is one in which the weather does not change much. Temperature, barometric pres-



NOT A REST

Piling the family into the car and driving across the country in traffic like this is not likely to give you an "emotional armistice" which is one of the health benefits you can get from a vacation if it is medically planned and directed.



MOUNTAIN SOLITUDE

May be what the doctor orders for you, but your neighbor may get surf bathing or some other different climatic prescription for his vacation. This photograph was made in Yellowstone National Park by Jack Haynes.

sure and humidity scarcely vary from day to day or even from month to month. There are almost no winds or storms. The stimulating climate is just the reverse and is characterized by sudden and wide changes in atmospheric conditions. Northern climates are generally considered stimulating and southern climates enjoy the reputation of being sedative.

These factors are relative, however, and what may be a stimulating climate for you, if that is what you need, may be rather sedative for another person. Dr. Singer illustrates this by three types of persons: the New England fisherman, the New York business man and the Florida farmer.

Each to His Own

"Each one of these is healthy in his own environment. The late fall climate of North Carolina will be stimulating to the Florida farmer and sedative to the New York business man. The New York business man will find the fall climate of Maine stimulating, while the New England fisherman, accustomed to drenching waves and strong winds, will find it mild."

Change to a stimulating climate provides a "challenge" whereas the change

to a sedative climate provides an "escape."

Delicate children, the feeble aged person, patients with such debilitating ailments as rheumatic heart disease, chronic nephritis and rheumatoid arthritis will probably benefit from a sedative climate which provides an escape from the hardships of winter.

Improves Metabolism

The challenge of a stimulating climate is in order, it seems, for the person whose body is not doing the most efficient job of blood-building or of breathing or of mineral utilization or of that kind of energy interchange called metabolism.

Discussing the effect of a stimulating climate on the body, Dr. Singer says that exposure to such a climate starts a slight disturbance in the system with marked and typical changes in the blood cell count and in the chemistry of the blood. At the same time parallel changes occur in metabolism. The body immediately tries to correct these changes by mobilizing its interrelated forces of defense—chemical, blood-building, glandular and neurovascular.

"By successive exposures," he states, "the amplitude of these climatic micro-

damages decrease as the acclimatization progresses. Parallel with the process of acclimatization, preexisting chronic disorders may be overcome with the same systemic effort."

Just as with other medical treatments, the size of the dose of climate is important as well as its quality. There is such a thing, Dr. Singer points out, as "an ineffective underexposure to climate and a harmful overexposure." The best dose, it appears, has to be prescribed in accordance with the season and climate selected; the condition, constitution and age of the individual; and the nature and stage of chronic disorder, if the climatic change is being prescribed for someone who is not well.

Special Treatments

Climatic treatment takes three main forms. First, there is plain change of climate. Then there is selective utilization of climatic factors. This takes in such things as sunbaths, bathing in salt or other kinds of water and getting out in the open air for long periods. Finally, Dr. Singer points out, climate can be used as a background for special types of treatment such as mudbaths for arthritis, carbon dioxide baths for heart and blood vessel disorders and inhalation treatment for chronic bronchial disorders.

Whether you are sick or well, you are apt to get into trouble if you plan your own climatic treatment without having your physician's advice. To get the greatest health value from your vacation, you need his advice not only as to the place you select for your vacation but as to how long you should stay there and what activities you should pursue. Maybe you should spend all morning in the saddle, but your neighbor should play nine holes of golf in the morning and rest on the beach all afternoon. Some people make the mistake of overeating while on vacation and many fail to eat a balanced diet when away from home with its carefully plan-

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ned meals. Still others, perhaps, need to use the vacation to start them on proper dietary habits. Other pitfalls of undirected vacations mentioned by Dr. Singer are faulty habits of sleeping, insufficient utilization of climatic factors and overexposure to climatic stimulation with consequent reactions of an unpleasant and harmful nature.

One of the benefits you can get from a medically planned vacation, especially if you have been or still are ill, is what Dr. Singer calls an "emotional armistice." This and the shedding of faulty living habits are, in his opinion, just as necessary for the future welfare of the chronic sick as the baths, medicinal waters and other features of "the cure" at a health resort.

Rest for Nerves

Perhaps healthy people do not have so many phobias and idiosyncrasies as sick people are apt to develop, but an emotional armistice sounds like a good prescription for many a person who, though not sick in bed, is tired out or keyed up to such a pitch that he does not appreciate how much he needs rest. When you reach the point of flying into a rage or bursting into tears over trifles, you probably know without being told by the doctor that you need to get away and rest. But if you pile the family into the car and drive to the shore for a week, or go on a camping trip with four or five other tired friends, you are not likely to get much of an emotional armistice.

The health resort, with its peaceful atmosphere and medical supervision, provides an ideal setting for an emotional armistice. Whether you need baths and massage and other treatment or not, you

will get the daily nap, the long night's rest, the regular, well-planned meals and the proper amount of exercise and fresh air that your body and mind require and which you are not likely to get for yourself on the medically unplanned vacation.

Don't Ask the Neighbor

If medical supervision is important for the well person's vacation, it is doubly important for those who are not well. You often hear a sick friend say his doctor told him change of climate might be good for him, so he is going to Arizona, or the north woods or some seashore resort "because it did John so much good." Such a person is like those uninformed people who take whatever medicine John said helped his cough or his stomach trouble. Your cough or stomach trouble may call for an entirely different medicine and your health may require a different climatic change than the one that helped John.

"The chronic sick of America," Dr. Singer says, "consist of the real forgotten people."

These hundreds of thousands, who cannot find help in surgery or in medical treatment, go away for their health, starting their vacation with insufficient medical advice or none at all. If they can afford to stay at a medically supervised health resort they will receive medical and health care. Unfortunately most of them cannot afford this. But if they go to a resort which lacks a well-organized medical set-up, they will find the general practitioner too busy during the vacation season to be of much help. He has not enough time to devote to the acutely sick who may need him, much less to study the effects of his climate so as to give competent advice about it. So the chronic sick, as Dr. Singer puts it, "fall prey to quacks, charlatans and cultists who follow them like vultures."

The situation is quite different in European health resorts. There is, in the first place, scientific cooperation between the physician at the health resort or spa and the patient's own doctor. About three-fourths of the patients are sent to the resort or spa by their own physician or some medical consultant. Whether they are sent by a physician or not, in most of the resorts they are all required to have a medical examination by the physician at the resort, to give him a full history of their ailment, and to remain under medical supervision while at the resort. The resort physician keeps in touch with the patient's own doctor and sends him reports of the patient's progress. Accommodations are generally available to suit varying pocketbooks. In

France the government, railroads, utilities and charitable organizations cooperate in maintaining several thousand sanatorium beds, in spas and health resorts for both child and adult chronic sick.

Getting back to American vacational migrations, the most popular points for the 35,000,000 vacationists, healthy or sick, are: first, seashores and lakeshores; second, mountains; and third, deserts. Only about a third of the annual vacationists stay longer than ten days within a state. Those who stay less than ten days within a state make up about 65 per cent. of the total number of migrants.

20% Winter Vacations

Another breakdown which Dr. Singer made of the vacational migration figures shows that the greater portion of them, as you might expect, take place in summer. This accounts for about 70 per cent. About 20 per cent. take place in winter, and the remaining 10 per cent. are in spring and fall.

Inhabitants of all states take part in the vacational migrations, but midwesterners and those from the northeast predominate. Typical vacation states—these are the states where vacationists go, but not necessarily where they should go for their best health buys in vacations—are (1) New England, New York and New Jersey; (2) Florida and the Gulf states; (3) California; (4) the Great Lakes states; and (5) the desert states—New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona.

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In replacing trees lost in the New England hurricane, a botanist advises that New England towns have a fine opportunity to make the streets interesting to a public which is increasingly "plant conscious."

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