

Measles Said To Curb Growth Of Fingernails

New York—(Science Service)—A good case of the measles cuts down the growth rate of fingernails, a pediatrician reported here.

In fact, measles and kidney diseases appear to be the biggest inhibitors, Dr. Maarten S. Sibinga of the New York University College of Medicine explained.

Contrary to some beliefs, malnutrition and restricted diets do not alter the growth rate appreciably, he said. The average growth rate was found to be near .105 millimeters per day. This measurement was obtained by enlarging photographs taken each day of those fingernails under observation.

Fluctuation Noticed

There appears to be no difference in the average nail growth rate of males and females. However, fluctuations in growth rate were noticed at times in both sexes, the pediatrician said.

Since it is well known that the nails and hair grow after death, Dr. Sibinga measured the growth of the nails of three dead adults. The nail growth of two of them was followed for 10 days while that of the third was followed for eight.

Nail growth was found to be within the low normal average growth rate of live persons for the first two or three days after death. This was followed by a somewhat slower growth rate thereafter, and growth had not ceased at the time observations were discontinued.

However, within that observation period, Dr. Sibinga noted that measles appeared to have a more inhibiting effect upon nail growth than did death.

There are marked individual variations in the rate of nail growth at all ages, but for the same individual and the same nail the rate of growth is relatively constant and can be used to study the effect of various physiologic and pathologic disturbances, he concluded.

Strontium-90 Level Found High In Midwest Hay

Washington—(Science Service)—Samples of alfalfa hay grown in Minnesota and South Dakota have been found to contain more than 10 times the maximum permissible level of strontium-90.

These figures, and others, were released here by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. They are based on samples tested in October of last year.

Other samples of strontium-90 levels revealed that alfalfa hay grown in Nebraska contained one and one-half times the permissible level, and almost eight times the permissible level in Maryland.

Studied in 19 States

Samples of the beta radioactivity of alfalfa hay and ensilage were studied in 19 states. Only the above four were studied for their strontium-90 count. The counts of the other samples remain unknown.

The maximum permissible level of strontium-90 has been set at 80 micromicrocuries per liter or kilogram in the entire diet over a lifetime. This standard was set by the National Committee on Radiation Protection and Measurements.

Health officials here, however, expressed the belief these newly detected high levels are not dangerous. Available evidence indicates that the amount of strontium-90 appearing in milk is considerably less than the amount of strontium-90 in the cow's diet. Yet, health officials say they do not know exactly how much of the dangerous isotope travels to the milk and meat of the cow.

Radioactivity Removed

When asked about foods that are grown in these areas and consumed directly by humans, Food and Drug physiologist Dr. Edwin Laug said that normal processing, that is, washing and blanching of vegetables, should remove most of the radioactivity.

However, the exact amount that is removed by this method has not been determined. The U. S. Public Health Service plans to examine the radioactivity of 473 samples of 50 varieties of food throughout the country.

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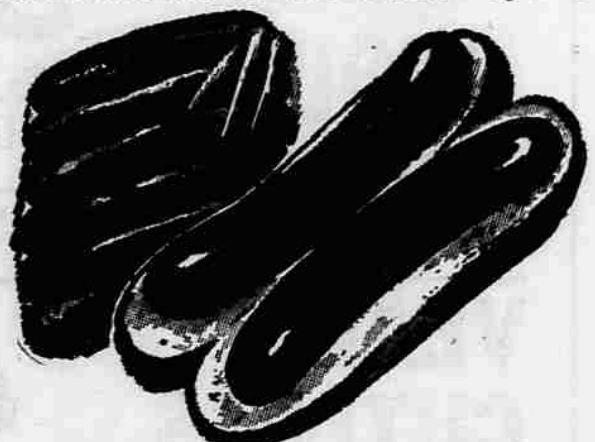
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