

Heart

(Continued)

One use of new surgical techniques involved an 11-month-old boy at Cook County Children's Hospital in Chicago. Danny had a hole in his heart between the two lower chambers known as the ventricles. There was no hope for him unless surgery could cover the hole somehow.

A team of doctors and nurses worked on Danny for five-and-a-half hours. The heart-lung machine periodically did the work of the body, leaving the bloodless heart open and clear to the surgeons' vision. They mended the hole, and little Danny is well on the road to a happy and normal life.

Four other similarly successful operations have been performed at the same hospital in recent months.

NOT ALL heart conditions, of course, require surgery. Heart attacks come from a variety of causes, usually after some warning signal. About a year before my brother's attack (he recovered, incidentally) he had a severe case of high blood pressure. This was reduced by drugs. However, climbing blood pressure usually indicates excessive physical or mental strain in the patient and suggests immediate examination to determine the cause.

Some heart attacks occur because the inner walls of the coronary arteries become narrowed or blocked by fatty deposits and plugs. These may be caused by a high level of cholesterol in the blood.

Several researchers have suggested a relationship between fatty foods and a high cholesterol level, but more recent surveys question the theory. The New York State Health Commissioner, Dr. Herman Hilleboe, and a University of California biostatistician, Dr. Jacob Yerushalmy, say the suggested association deserves re-evaluation. Others hold that there is nothing substantial in the claim against fatty foods.

An excess of cholesterol causes or induces atherosclerosis—hardening of the arteries—which annually kills more than 200,000 Americans. Whatever the cause of cholesterol, medical science is waging a fight against it. Pharmaceutical houses are developing compounds containing fatty acids which they hope will decrease cholesterol in the blood.

Surgery is attempting to remedy plugged or clogged coronary arteries supplying the vital blood to the working muscle of the heart. When the blood flow is cut off, part of the heart muscle dies. If the artery is badly narrowed, the heart hurts with angina pectoris because of the extra strain placed on it in struggling for blood.

These narrowed or plugged arteries can be reamed out, somewhat as the pipe smoker reams out the stem of his

pipe. This is regarded in medical circles as a bold new surgical attack.

Other attempts are under way to prevent new blood clots with anticoagulants. A 10-year study of anticoagulants shows that these drugs have drastically reduced the occurrence of second heart attacks.

Only 14 percent of those receiving anticoagulants suffered a second heart attack within five years, while 60 percent of those who did not receive the drugs had additional trouble.

The drugs also reduced the death rate from second heart attacks. In the drug group 20.6 percent died from the next heart attack, while in the non-drug group the next attack was fatal to 53 percent.

MEDICAL reports indicate that heart disease is becoming more prevalent today among our youth, possibly because of the excessive nervous tension under which we live. Tension can lead to a chronic state of constriction of the arterioles, the smaller branches of the arteries throughout the body. Constriction of the arterioles places a heavier load upon the heart to pulse blood through them. Eventually the heart becomes weary and hypertensive heart disease occurs.

However, a group of heart specialists at the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Cleveland may be on the trail of a cure for hypertensive heart disease. It utilizes a chemical to block the body's use of substances which cause constriction of the blood vessels.

Another victory has been scored in the fight against rheumatic fever, which is responsible for 95 percent of all deaths from heart disease in persons under 30. The exact cause of rheumatic fever is unknown although a streptococcal infection always precedes an onslaught of the disease.

The first attack almost never kills and, fortunately, subsequent attacks now can be prevented by penicillin, sulfa, or other drugs.

An ounce of prevention is always worth a pound of cure, and this is especially true in regard to your heart. Watch for danger signals. Pains in the chest could be an indication of a pending coronary thrombosis. Difficult breathing and bothersome pulsations should not go unheeded. Visit your doctor to determine the cause of rising blood pressure.

Watch your diet carefully. Continuous heavy eating can put a constant strain on the heart and eventually induce heart trouble. Unusual physical strains should be avoided, as well as sudden or prolonged exertion.

Keep your weight at what you should have weighed between the ages of 25 and 30. Avoid unnecessary emotional upsets because they can make your heart beat faster and send your blood pressure up.

By all means, enjoy life. But do it at a slow, easy pace; you'll enjoy it longer that way.

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