

ation still is being used to treat noncancerous conditions such as enlarged thymus, acne, psoriasis, and ringworm.

Still another case is fluoroscopy, one of the most widespread of medical diagnostic procedures. The radiation dose delivered is much higher than from an X-ray machine, and there is a greater risk of the rays bombarding the patient in organs other than the one under examination. Yet in about half the cases, the fluoroscopic examination is conducted by a doctor who has not had special training in radiation. And despite widespread warnings, there are still hundreds of shoe-fitting fluoroscopic machines in the U.S. to which children are exposed.

Radiation is a particular menace to young children whose fast-growing cells are much more vulnerable to damage and whose small bodies receive a much heavier dose than an adult's during treatment or diagnosis. We must realize that in them as potential parents lies the greatest danger of crippled, weakened future generations.

Every dose of radiation to which a child is subjected, from the time he lies unborn in his mother's body until he has reached maturity, increases the danger to him of leukemia and other forms of cancer. In addition, he faces a greater risk of damage to reproductive organs which can lead to sterility or to a defective descendant.

TODAY WE LIVE in a highly mobile society. It is not unusual for a family with growing children to move five to 10 times from one state or region to another. In 10 years' time, there is no telling how much radiation their children may receive from a succession of doctors, dentists, school physical examinations, and hospitals. As we live today, there are no permanent family health records which provide a clue to the number of these exposures.

A solution to this problem appears later in this article.

The second great menace to health from radiation comes from fall-out.

In this case, microscopic particles of radioactive debris are introduced into the atmosphere by the testing of nuclear weapons. When this radioactive debris showers down on the earth's surface in snow and rain, it is absorbed by the soil, leaves, and roots of plants. As these plants are eaten by people or by the fish and grazing animals that people eat, the radioactive particles enter the human body. This dangerous radiation is unaffected whether the foods are eaten raw, boiled, fried, or broiled. Once within the body, the radioactive material concentrates in our organs and bones; there it remains for years, incessantly giving off tiny doses of radiation which affect the bones, blood, or tissues.

Even though nuclear weapon tests have

been suspended since 1958, some fall-out debris is still drifting down and will continue to do so for several more years.

An indication of the broadness of this radioactive danger was discovered as long ago as 1957—before the series of huge nuclear blasts by the U.S. and the Soviet Union—when samples of radioactive strontium were detected in snow near the South Pole; in the waters of the Danube River; in the Mississippi River; in some Midwest grain fields; and in milk in Australia.

Strontium-90, the most dangerous of radioactive particles, seeks out the bones in the human body. Concentrations in children's bones in this country have mounted steadily since the start of testing of large nuclear devices. These concentrations are now three or four times higher than in the bones of adults. The maximum concentration of strontium-90 now occurs in infants of about one year of age and is 10 times that of the adult level.

AS A RESULT of recent scientific advances, the capability of producing cheap nuclear bombs will be brought within the reach of many nations. If these nations are not able to resist the temptation to test their new bombs, more radioactive fall-out inevitably will shower down on us.

A few years ago, Atomic Energy Commission spokesmen assured the public that the radioactive debris from fall-out would remain in the upper atmosphere for many years, and that when it did descend to earth, it would be evenly distributed over the entire surface of the globe. This past summer, results of scientific studies showed that fall-out debris, including strontium-90, has come down to earth much faster than the AEC anticipated, and that it has tended to distribute itself over the earth in very uneven fashion, with some cities and regions getting a much higher dose of radioactive particles than others.

Fall-out from Russian bomb tests, for example, seems to have concentrated mainly on the northern regions of the earth which include not only the U.S. but 80 percent of the world's peoples. Salt Lake soil has been found to contain three times as much strontium-90 as Miami or Los Angeles. The highest concentration of strontium-90 in milk has been found in St. Louis.

We will not be able to tell for many years how harmless or dangerous these amounts of strontium-90 are.

The third and newest hazard from radiation comes from nuclear power plants, and the industrial, military, and scientific nuclear projects that are already completed or planned for operation in the 1960s.

Wherever these plants are, there is nuclear fission; wherever there is nuclear

(Continued)

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