



Advice on Health (No. 145)

RIBOFLAVIN

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Health Department)



THE other day the papers contained what was presumably a somewhat garbled cable about the importance of a certain Olde English beverage in preventing deficiency of riboflavin, a condition known to occur in the U.S.A. Many people were under the impression that riboflavin was a new vitamin, but it is well past its infancy now. It was from 1937 onwards that the terms vitamin G and B2 were dropped in favour of the accepted name of "riboflavin," so designated because it contains the sugar ribose and has a yellow-green fluorescence which you may notice in whey or egg white.

Like vitamin B1, this second member of the vitamin B series has a part to play in the complicated process of oxidation in the cells of the body.

Gross lack of riboflavin in the diet leads to the following symptoms in the human being: certain changes in the

eye, e.g., dulness or even opacity of the cornea, sensitiveness to light, inability to see in dim light (it compares with vitamin A in these respects); cracks at the corners of the mouth, peeling of the lips, inflammation along the edges of the eyelids and at the folds between the nose and the cheek, an intense purplish-redness of the tongue. These symptoms have been reported in patients in China, U.S.A., the Gold Coast, and in certain children in England. It may occur in any person in whom the absorptive powers of the alimentary tract are impaired, e.g., patients with sprue.

A chronic shortage or, more correctly, a suboptimal amount over a whole life span shows itself in a colony of rats thus: the vigour and the length of life of the rats is diminished. Riboflavin has thus some claim to share in the property of "adding years to life and life to years."

The amount required per day is from 1.8 milligrams for a sedentary man up

to 3.0 mg. for a boy in his late 'teens, or 3.0 mg. for a nursing mother.

Where To Get It

The most important common sources are milk and meats. A pint of milk supplies 1.2 mg., which means a good start up the ladder. Without that milk, it is difficult to bring the dietary up to the necessary level, unless some specially rich source like liver or kidney is used; for, of the meats, liver is the richest source, 2oz. supplying 1.7 mg., while for 2oz. kidney 1.1 mg. is the figure. Why do we continue to allow livers to be wasted by hydatid infection when other meats come second as far as nutritional value is concerned?—4oz. beef, mutton, or pork furnish approximately 0.3 mg. Of dried beans or peas, a serving contains about 0.2 mg.; an ounce of peanuts about the same as an ounce of cheese, viz., 0.14 mg. Wholemeal bread contains about three times as much as white bread, 4oz. of the former providing about 0.17 mg. Vegetables contain varying amounts, a serving of half-a-cupful ranging from 0.15 mg. or more for spinach to 0.02 for onions. Fruits are not very good contributors of riboflavin. Half-a-pint of beer contains only 0.08 mg., so why all the fuss? From these amounts, you may like to construct your own chart—those of you who have waded through all these figures!



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