

Appendicitis

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Department)

JAMES DILLY-DALLY had a "tummy" pain that used to worry him at times. One morning he woke up with an outsize in stomach-aches. In fact, it felt like the father of all belly-aches. James was tough. He knew what to do—or thought he did. So up he got and gave himself a big dose of castor-oil. Then back into bed with a hot-water-bottle. That night he could stand it no longer. He gave in, got the doctor on an emergency call. And did the hospital theatre staff like that night operation! James's appendix had called it a day and had burst before he reached the operating table. He was pretty ill for a while before he recovered, and was off work a couple of months.

Now this business of getting to hospital just in time with appendicitis is happening frequently. A few get there too late, and die—all because they failed to call the doctor in time.

The appendix is a part of the large intestine—a blind alley in the right-hand lower quadrant of your abdomen. It's about the size of your little finger and has no usefulness.

Appendicitis is an inflammation of the appendix, from any cause. Nature warns you by a pain. It doesn't have to begin in the right side over the appendix, but may be felt in the pit of the stomach or elsewhere. It comes on suddenly, sharply. At first it may come and go, but it keeps on coming back, sharper and sharper. It gradually centres round the appendix area. There is usually fever. The pain continues. Get a doctor without delay if you, or anyone in your household, has a pain in the abdomen that lasts more than three hours.

The risk is that the appendix may burst and spread infection to the filmy lining on the inside of the abdomen,

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Nazis themselves if they obey their orders while disagreeing with them in principle. This seems to me a pernicious and dangerous doctrine, since the logical outcome, if it were generally adopted, would be the destruction of almost every living German. But it is a doctrine that comes very glibly off the lips of Walter Huston, as the Russian doctor in the film, when he shoots down the German doctor (Erich von Stroheim) because the latter has been forced, by commands from higher up, to do something which as an individual he abominates.

In any case, ticklish issues of political and moral responsibility such as this need much more skilful handling than they receive in *The North Star*, and this in spite of the fact that the film was written by Lillian Hellman and directed by Lewis Milestone. Some of the acting is very good, some is very bad; some of the direction shows imagination, and at other times it is merely crude. And Hollywood keeps on getting in the way. The Soviet village which we see at peace is too often reminiscent of musical-comedy or a Middle-West rural idyll to be thoroughly convincing, and when we see it at war, it too often recalls a cowboys-and-Indians thriller.

After all, where there is no restraint there cannot be much sincerity.

called the peritoneum. You have heard of peritonitis—well, peritonitis is inflammation of this thin, abdominal lining. Peritonitis is always serious—the only way to avoid the danger is to get the inflamed appendix out before its poisons seep into the abdomen.

Don't Eat or Drink

While you are waiting to make up your mind about an abdominal pain, you have certain cardinal things to do. You must keep the inflamed part at rest. To give the intestines work to do is only going to increase the inflammation—if it should be appendicitis, the appendix will run the risk of bursting.

Nothing must be taken by mouth. To eat or drink is to start the digestive sys-

tem working. There may have been sickness or vomiting. Something to settle the stomach may be suggested, but take nothing by mouth for persistent pain in the abdomen.

Nature is trying to keep the intestines at rest. So avoid laxatives and enemas. Don't make the bowel work with castor oil or an enema. Forcing movement may make the appendix burst. And don't use a hot-water-bottle for a persistent—over three hours—pain in the abdomen. Cold is better: cold compresses or an ice-bag keep the intestine at rest, whereas heat stimulates action.

Don't dilly-dally too long with an angry appendix—shift the responsibility to the doctor.

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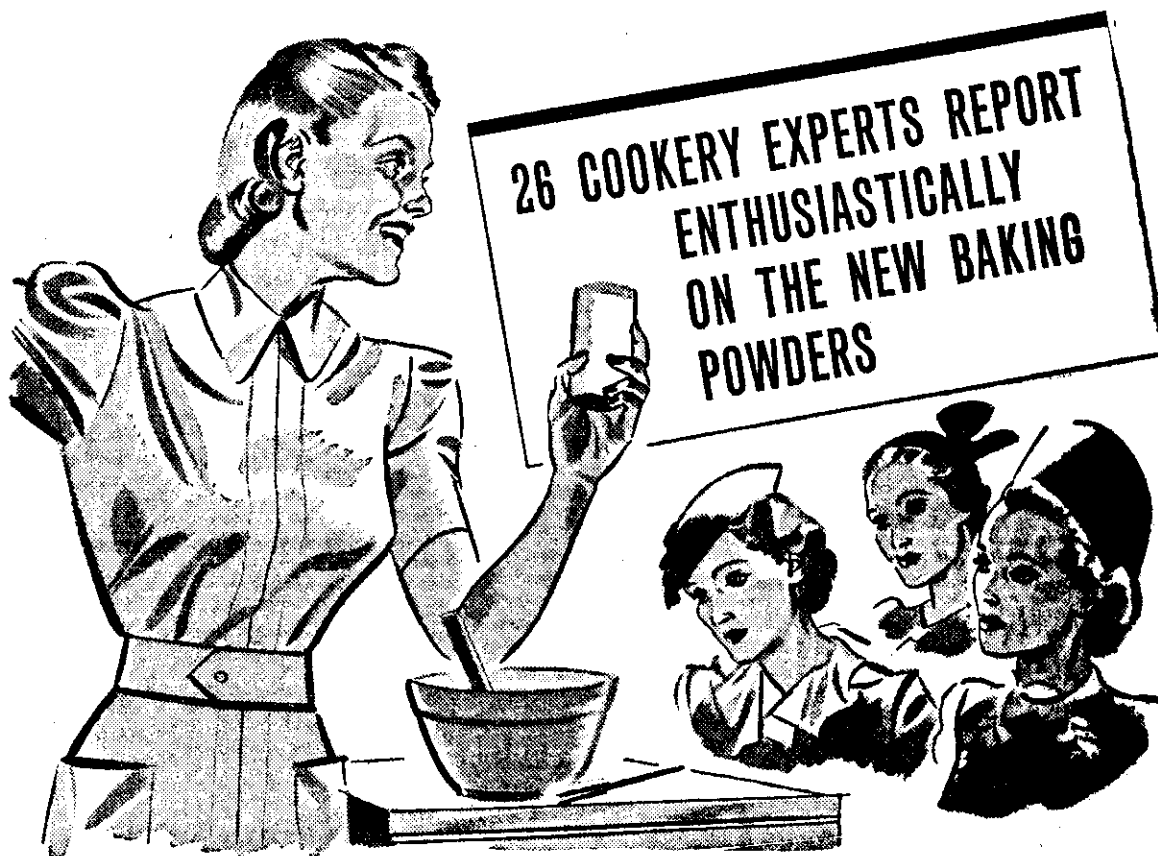
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