

After Oliver Twist

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

IF Oliver Twist at the age of nine remained unsatisfied at the end of his meal, how much more defective were the quantities of food for the older boys. From 12 years onwards through the adolescent period, when the greatest increase in growth is taking place, greater attention to diet is required than many people realise. Not only does the growing body demand more body-building materials, more minerals, and more vitamins, but also the healthful muscular activity that is so desirable at this age and is usually taken in the form of games, demands more total food in order to give the calories or energy for this activity. Truly it is the era of the "hollow legs."

The great growth in their bones, when they shoot up in height, needs additional calcium. Studies on adolescents show that there is not infrequently a deficit in this mineral at this time unless $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 pints of milk are taken daily. More blood is being formed as the body increases in size; therefore more iron is also needed.

The adolescent period is one where there is the greatest tendency for dental caries to occur. We should do all we can to supply the rapidly growing body with the food elements that it needs.

The foods recommended by nutrition authorities for the 12-14 year age are as follows:

Meat—the ration allowance, substituting or adding fish or liver or 3oz. of cheese during the week.

Milk— $1\frac{3}{4}$ pints, including that used in cooking, etc.

Egg—one daily, or substitute, such as cheese or peas, beans or lentils.

Potatoes and root vegetables— $\frac{3}{4}$ lb.

Green vegetables, cauliflower or swedes— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. (heaped breakfast cupful when cooked).

Some raw fruit or vegetable daily.

Butter—the ration allowance.

Fat—2oz. in puddings, etc.

Oatmeal or other whole grain cereal, not omitting the vitamin B1 in that whole grain cereal—one large plateful.

Bread, wholemeal— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

Cereal pudding—good sized helping.

Sugar for sweetening cooked foods or for jam, etc.—the ration allowance.

Cod liver oil—1 teaspoon, or substitute, in winter time.

Sunshine in summer time.

If you have doubts about their eating this quantity of vegetables, seeing is believing. If not at one meal, then certainly at two. And this list assumes that the vegetables are cooked with due regard to retaining the vitamin C and other nutrients that are so often thrown down the sink, or frequently lost in large-scale cookery. If there is any uncertainty, add oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes, or rose-hip syrup, or other rich source of vitamin C during the day.

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