

A TIME FOR COLDS

This is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from ZB, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health



WE are now in the first winter month. It's a time when we are prone to catch colds, and flu bugs are dodging around. They've been doing some research work on this in England, for there about one-third of all absences from work are for respiratory troubles—mainly influenza, colds and bronchitis. In one study, where contacts could be traced nearly half the colds were caught at work. I think that would be true of us. Most of our colds are brought to the home either from school or from work. In another study it was shown that the attack rate for colds was very much lower in rooms with fewer people. The more people per unit floor space the more colds found victims.

In a third piece of research about 200 people working in three separate rooms were followed through late autumn, winter and early spring, for their cold history. The immunity to colds was lessened by chilling and fatigue. Well, Grandma told us that! She said, "Don't sit in a draught," and "change your wet clothes or you'll get a chill and have a cold." The only mistake Grandma made was saying that the chill actually caused the cold. We're a little more precise now. The chill or the overtiredness lowers our resistance and allows cold and flu bugs to get the upper hand. You know, I expect, that about 5 per cent of us may be carrying the germs or viruses around when colds and flu are in the neighbourhood, without going down to the trouble. Get a chill or burn the candle at both ends or overwork and get overtired, and the germs you've been carrying around overcome the resistance in the mucous membranes. From being an unharmed carrier, you tip yourself, through a chill or overtiredness, into a sad sufferer.

But to get back to my story. In this nine months' research into the colds of these people it was proved that there was such a thing as a special time for catching colds. In the first real winter month (November it was in England) there was a correlation between a sharp November outbreak of colds in the group and a fall in both outside temperature and relative humidity. The air of the rooms, on analysis showed a sharp rise in droplet borne and droplet spread germs. What had happened? Probably the weather led to chilling, precipitated colds, the colds were not kept home but taken to work and the sneezing and coughing gave that rise in air-borne germs. The outside cold made folk shut their windows, reducing the ventilation, thus maintaining the higher proportion of germs in the air and making it easy for colds to spread.

Now I'm back to where I started. There is a time when colds are more likely, a time of sharp falls in tempera-

ture and relative humidity, and that time should be about now. What steps can we take to keep up our resistance? They're simple things. Eat right, dress right, sleep right and ventilate correctly. This business of eating in cold weather! If your diet is unbalanced and you're eating too much carbohydrate you'll feel cold, you'll be inclined to "mug" up more, and won't fight old colds so well. You can take more fats in the cold weather. Fats are twice as heating as sugar, bread, scones and cakes. But please keep on your proper amounts of milk, cheese, vegetables

and fruits. In these and your fats and meats you'll have your protective elements for body resistance. To make sure of enough vitamin D growing children should all be taking a daily dose of fish liver oil or substitute through the winter months.

This business of dressing right for winter doesn't mean flannels and closely-woven woollens next to the skin. You want the air-cell type of material there. It's the open-meshed materials that keep warmth best at skin level. So when feeling cold, put your jersey or jumper on top or your overcoat. This is the best way to keep warm through clothes—open mesh materials next the skin, tightly-woven clothes as extras on top.

This business of sleeping right for keeping fit is elementary, and you know it. Ventilation has a lot to do with this and with dodging colds. I'll take that subject further next week.



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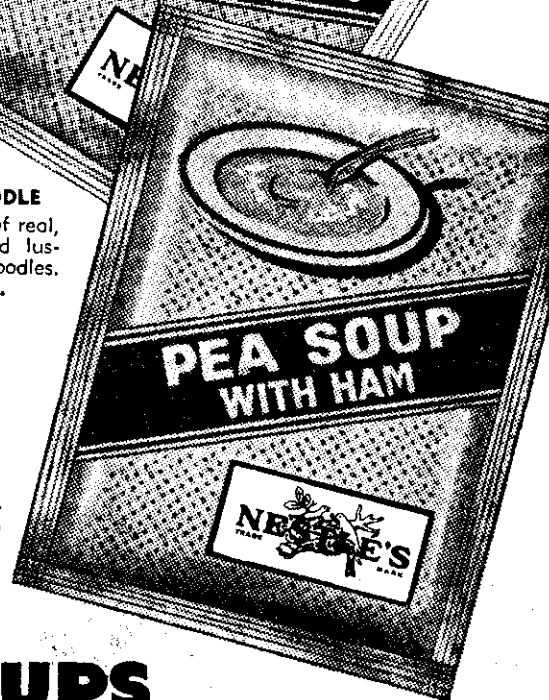


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