

We ask the doctor why fish oil is so valuable.

Her answer is easy to understand. "There are two reasons. It is a fat, and our bodies need fat. It also contains two valuable vitamins, A and D. An adequate supply of vitamin A keeps our mucous membrane healthy and guards us against colds. Vitamin D is the bone and teeth vitamin. For children it is the only safe protection against rickets."

"But," we ask, "isn't milk, with its calcium, as good a bone and teeth builder?"

A simple analogy makes things plain. "To build a wall you need bricks, mortar, and a bricklayer. Calcium (in milk) provides the bricks, phosphorus (in eggs) provides the mortar, and vitamin D is the bricklayer."

We learn, too, that, apart from sunshine, fish oil is the best source of vitamin D. There is little of this vital ingredient in our ordinary diet. Sunshine and cod-liver oil help build bonny babies, or at least provide them with bonny teeth and bones, and if children cannot get sunshine, then cod-liver oil will guard against rickets.

And are all fish oils equally valuable? Not by any means. Before the war Karitane Products imported 10,000 gallons of cod-liver oil a year. It came mainly from England and Norway. But 200 gallons of hapuka-liver oil has as much vitamin A and 400 gallons as much vitamin D. This means that our own proper, plentiful in New Zealand waters, contain an oil with fifty times more vitamin A and twenty-five times more vitamin D than the cod-liver oil we previously imported. Ling is next in value, and then comes the previously despised shark, which produces an oil high in vitamin A and, because of its size, a lot of it. Kingfish and barracouta also have valuable livers, and though the factory processes cod livers, it prefers the others because of their better quality.

How long have we known the health-giving properties

of fish liver oil? For centuries; but up till twenty years ago the usual method of extracting it was to rot the liver in the sun and collect the oil that remained. A high time must have been had by both manufacturer and patient.

This knowledge that the smell is better is small comfort when you get your first whiff of the Island Bay factory. Even though the livers arrive frozen hard, and are salted down and kept in a freezer, there is a fruity flavour to the air both inside the factory and out. But you get used to it, and in no time are interestedly watching the manager show you the difference between the liver of a shark and a hapuka. You notice, though, that he hurries to wash his hands.

The manager explains that when the war began Karitane Products had good stocks of imported oil and it was not until 1943 that the factory was started. In eighteen months it has produced more than 10,000 gallons of oil and has exported 5,000 gallons to the Ministry of Food in the United Kingdom. The manager tells you New Zealand will never again import fish liver oils. In fact, she will be able to help less fortunate countries if the supply of our raw material remains plentiful.

The factory was built at Island Bay, the harbour of Wellington's fishing fleet. More livers were needed than Wellington could supply, so a drive was organized



Examining the Livers.