Calisthenics

Stand 6-14-54

Q.—I am now 80 years old and I still take two 25-minute periods of calisthenics every day. Back in 1916, I started brushing my teeth every day with a stiff brush. Is this harmful?

A.—I assume that the stiff brush you have been using for decades is not a wire brush. I do not believe it could be very harmful or you would have found reason to give it up years ago. The calisthenics are an important aid to fitness and the brushing can stimulate the circulation of the skin if it is not overdone. Since rubbing with a towel will accomplish the same purpose and is less likely to injure the skin, you might want to consider switching.

Q.—I am a housewife, 22 years old. About two years ago my toenails started to become thick and hard. What could cause this?

A.—The toenails are much more likely to become thickened than the fingernails. In some persons this is an inherited trait. In others, wearing shoes that are too short may be the cause, especially if the nails are not kept trimmed. When outward growth of the nails is thus impeded, the nails tend to become thick and to curve downward.

Q.—What is choorocephaloplastic? 

A.—Chorocephaloplasia or orthocephaloplasia means that the bones of the arms and legs are very short but the rest of the skeleton is of normal proportions. The patient is a type of dwarf as opposed to the midget who is abnormally small but perfectly formed. Since choorocephaloplasia is usually an inherited characteristic, there can be no corrective treatment. A child with this type of dwarfism is normal mentally, but is likely to suffer a lot of teasing from thoughtless playmates. He will, however, need realistic guidance in planning for his future as an adult.

Q.—I am bothered with goitrous arthritis. Can you give me a list of foods that will help to control this disease?

A.—For you it is not so much a matter of eating certain foods as of avoiding such foods as meats, especially glandular cuts (kidney, liver, sweetbreads); meat extracts (toumille cubes); fish, including shellfish (clams and mussels), permitted; and lentils. There is danger that certain foods may be harmful.

Great Vogue

Of Isometrics

Stand 6-30-65

There can be no doubt that regular exercise is an aid to physical fitness. At the moment a type of exercise called isometric is having a great popularity. When you pick up an apple you use only a few of the fibers of the muscles involved. If you pick up a 10-pound weight you use more fibers of the same muscles. Only when you try to lift a 50-pound weight and fail have you used all the fibers of those muscles.

That maximum effort, sustained for a few seconds, is the basis of all isometric exercises. Since these exercises do nothing to improve the range of motion of your joints, they are of limited value, especially for persons over 60 who are beginning to feel the twinges of arthritis. For this reason isometric exercises, valuable as they are, should not be used to the exclusion of other forms of exercise even by persons who are bedridden.

One isometric exercise consists of sitting in a chair and pressing the heel of one elevated foot against the resisting top of the other. Or you may stand on a low stool and press upward with all your might against the top of the dog frame.

While sitting in a chair try to lift the seat a few inches nearer the ceiling. Or grasp your arms behind your head and push your head forward against the maximum resistance of your neck muscles. This is a sample of what you can attempt without even leaving the room. It is estimated that such an effort for each group of muscles, sustained for six to 10 seconds is beneficial as a more prolonged effort. But some authorities state that these exercises should be done several times a day and not just once as advocated by others.

The main advantage of isometric exercises is that they can be done anywhere without special clothes or equipment. This is a boon to the office worker who has little or no opportunity to engage in outdoor sports during the week. Furthermore they are safe.

It is a great mistake, however, to expect any results from doing these exercises in a half-hearted or haphazard manner. They should not be attempted by a person with heart disease or an organic nervous disease without the approval of his doctor.

Although some athletes use these exercises, the need for them is doubtful. For most of the rest of us isometric exercises should be used in addition to and not as a substitute for regular outdoor exercise.