

## Selections.

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### Diuretics.

Up to a few years ago two conditions demanded the use of diuretics, i. e., accumulations of fluid within the body in the form of edema, ascites, etc., and renal disease without such edema. At present, diuretics are no longer employed for the latter condition and they are given only with the greatest caution in acute nephritis and pyelonephritis, as the kidneys demand rest like any other inflamed organ. In uncomplicated bacteriuria it is often desirable to wash out the kidneys, in order to remove, as much as possible, the bacteria, and in renal calculi it is decidedly proper to increase the flow of urine. In the majority of instances, however, diuretics will be prescribed to remove pathological accumulations of fluid in the cellular tissue and the serous cavities of the body.

Increased diuresis may be brought about by improving the circulation and by acting upon the kidneys directly. If the heart is stimulated, more blood will flow through the kidneys and more fluid will be removed. Diuretics of this class are especially indicated in primary heart-weakness, but since renal disease is often accompanied by cardiac decompensation, they are usually also of service here. In amyloid disease of the kidneys, pyelonephritis, and hydronephrosis, there frequently is no insufficiency of the heart, and hence these diuretics will do no good. The same may be said of cachectic edema and in uncomplicated effusions into the various cavities owing to tuberculosis or malignant disease.

It was formerly argued that cardiac remedies are dangerous in nephritis, owing to the increase in blood-pressure which follows. It is now known that the danger of apoplexy is very remote, since the blood-pressure will often fall owing to the removal of fluid and toxic products.

The most important drug of this class still is digitalis. It is most frequently employed in powder form or as digalen, which is more rapidly absorbed but also more quickly excreted. Both the fluid-extract of digitalis and the digalen can be used subcutaneously where a more rapid action is desired or where the stomach is to be spared.

The most valuable substitute of digitalis is strophanthus, which also acts rapidly and is rapidly excreted. Five drops of a good tincture correspond to about 2 decigrams of digitalis