

The Home Doctor

Felon

A felon, or whitlow, is a painful, suppurating inflammation of one of the fingers. It often starts in the last joint, though not always; but wherever it begins, it may extend to the whole hand. A felon is serious for several reasons. It causes continual and severe pain; it generally has to be treated by a surgeon; and if neglected, or improperly treated, it may lead to a deformed and disabled hand or arm.

A similar inflammation sometimes appears in the palm of the hand, and is called a palmar abscess. More rarely the abscess begins among the tissues at the back of the hand.

A felon may affect the parts immediately beneath the skin only; in that case, the sufferer escapes easily. Even then the suffering is great, and palmar abscess in a workman whose palms have grown thick and horny with toil may cause frightful pain until it is relieved by an operation. But when the pus forms deep down, among the fibers that surround the tendons, or under the periosteum—the fibrous covering of the bone—a felon is a much more serious matter.

In these cases, even if it were possible to endure the pain, it would be a mistake to wait for the pus to find its way to the surface. It is more likely to destroy the parts where it started, and then to burrow its way in all directions. In the tendinous variety, it sometimes travels through the fibrous sheath of the tendon, and appears as a palmar abscess. It may also follow the muscles of the arm, and cripple the limb permanently, or even make amputation necessary.

The periosteum is very tight and tough, and when pus has formed there and cannot break through the membrane, it will attack and destroy the bone itself.

An effort is sometimes made to head off a felon by cold applications, or by injecting an antiseptic into the tissues, but the effort is seldom successful, and as a general thing a deep and thorough cut by the surgeon's knife is necessary. Immediate relief follows, although the cut itself is so painful that the surgeon often gives the patient a whiff of nitrous oxide gas before he makes the incision.

After the Adenoids are Out

It is not unusual to hear a mother say, "We had John's adenoids removed, but he did not get a bit better, and the growths soon came back." Parents do not always understand that after an operation for the removal of growths in their child's nasal passages, an important duty rests upon them. The surgeon's work may be perfectly done, but a surgeon must pick up his instruments and go away. He leaves behind him a child who has perhaps for years fallen into the unfortunate habit of mouth-breathing, because he could get breath in no other way.

Now, mouth-breathing when well established is like other bad habits, hard to break. Just because the adenoids are gone, the child does not immediately close his mouth and draw his breath through his nose. He actually does not know how to do it. His mouth has always been open, and open it remains. The first result is that parents think the operation was either unnecessary or unskillfully done; probably another result is that the adenoids come back.

The child must be taught to breathe just as he is taught to know the multiplication table. You cannot do it by nagging reminders that his mouth is open; only patient training will undo the mischief. When a child is old enough to understand, a sensible talk with him will often accomplish a great deal. Explain to him how to breathe properly, and what are the consequences of breathing improperly. After you have aroused his interest and gained his cooperation, arrange for him a system of exercises.

Show the child what is meant by "the top of the lungs," and "the bottom of the lungs," and persuade him to breathe through the whole lung until he does it naturally. Exercises with the

arms, accompanied by deep, slow breathing, are often helpful. If the child's nostrils are obstructed, teach him to snuff up a simple solution of lukewarm water and salt, in order to clear the nasal passages.

Gangrene

Gangrene is the death of a part of the living body. Sometimes it results from an injury, such as burning or frost-bite, or from a surgical operation. Sometimes it is the consequence of a physical condition, with such causes as diabetes, or senility, or embolism. Whatever the

cause or whatever form it takes, it means that the obstruction to circulation has been so complete as to prevent local nutrition, and to bring about the death of the part.

Gangrene may be either "moist" or "dry." In the former case, the death of the part has been sudden, while it was still abundantly fed with the body fluids. Moist gangrene is therefore found in cases of severe accident. Bed-sores, carbuncles, and so-called "hospital gangrene" are of the same variety.

Senile gangrene and the gangrene caused by frost-bite are dry. The circulation of the aged is always somewhat impaired; and sometimes the blood finds it so difficult to force its way through the thickened and inelastic arteries that

the extremities of the body become gangrenous from sheer lack of nourishment.

Moist gangrene is always preceded by inflammation. The part swells, and is painful; the color, at first livid, turns to blue and then to black. Treatment, to be of value, must be prompt. The poison of gangrene is at first local; but if it is neglected and enters the system, the situation becomes grave. Even amputation of the diseased member may not save life.

As impaired circulation is at the root of the trouble, the treatment must try to restore the circulation, and combat the inflammation. Local heat is the best means of restoring the circulation. Hot bottles, or warm irrigations, or bandages of hot flannels may be used. Gangrene is not a matter for home treatment, except



The food which is taken to nourish the body and keep up vigor and strength becomes a poison to the system when digestion fails. You feel drowsy after meals, lose appetite, suffer from constipation, have pains in the bowels and through the body. Instead of being digested, the food ferments and gives rise to gas or wind on the stomach, which crowds about the heart, causing suffocating feelings and derangements of the heart's action.

Resort to aids to digestion cannot afford more than temporary relief, for the trouble is caused by torpid, sluggish action of the liver and bowels. These organs must be awakened so that they will filter the

poisons from the blood and remove from the system the accumulating waste matter.

Here lies the cause of indigestion and dyspepsia, and neglect only leads to chronic and complicated derangements, which destroy all comfort and shorten life.

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